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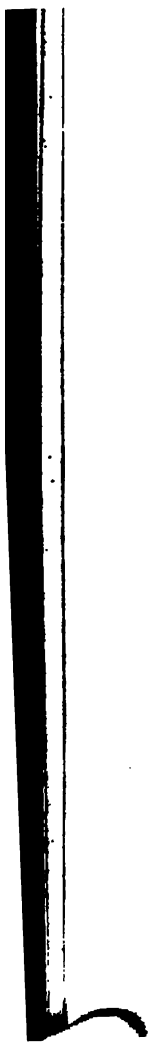


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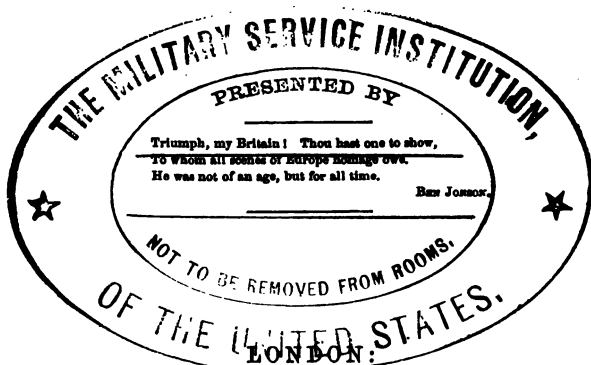
SHAKESPEARE

AND

HIS BIRTH-PLACE:

CONTAINING

A BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET, AND A GUIDE TO STRATFORD-
UPON-AVON AND ITS VICINITY.



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THE LIFE

OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,

WITH REFERENCES TO RESULTS DEDUCED FROM
RECENT MATERIALS.

LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—SHAKESPEARE'S ANCESTRY.

Shakespeare—His function in relation to the English-speaking race—
In what does he educate men—Stands alone—A law in the production
of great men—History of society divided into epochs—Transition
periods fertile in great men—Homer, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott,
their position—Shakespeare a myth—Parentage—John Shakespeare—
His occupation—Mary Arden.

If the question were put, What is Shakespeare to the world? the answer would be as complicated as the phases of his wonderful genius are many. But, keeping in view the more obvious relationships which Shakespeare bears to the English-speaking race, it may be said that, amid ten thousand authors and a thousand sources of knowledge, the study of his dramas, even when it is exclusive, gives the highest cultivation of æsthetic feeling and of imagination, and imbues the mind with noble and lofty views of man. It elevates man by withdrawing his attention from the gross materialism of the present and fixing his thoughts on the ideal, and, in the truest sense of the word, on the real and the unchanging. To read Shakespeare is also

to cultivate the habit of studying character and human life. This is the book in which humanity finds universal expression. Men do not know, amid commonplace events of everyday life, what thoughts, feelings, and aspirations they are capable of, until they see them expressed dramatically. A man who has spent his life in a tame and flat country knows not the feelings of sublimity that are latent in his nature and as yet existing only in the possible, which may one day be awakened by the sight of mighty hills rising in a cloud-land, or by a view of the vast ocean in a calm bay. To a man who stands for the first time in an ancient cathedral, and looks at the tall and massive pillars which appear more imposing from the subdued light that streams in through the finely stained windows, the peculiar feelings of awe that fill his mind are altogether new. Analogies of this sort may serve to show how Shakespeare supplies to men the conditions requisite for knowing what is latent in themselves, as well as for studying human nature. Hence his thoughts have been interwoven themselves with the current ideas and maxims of English-speaking men. The volume of his dramas being one with which every educated man is familiar, it is to the Anglo-Saxon race what Homer was to the Greeks—a book which everybody knows, and an allusion to whose sentiments is at once understood and creates in all a feeling of that common humanity which ever strives to find in another some opinion, some feeling which is shared in common. To sum up in a word—in the view that life is an education and that all things have for their ultimate end the for-

of character, to the question, In what is Shakespeare an educator of men? we answer, In affording the means of the highest cultivation of taste, in giving noble views of man and of his destiny, in cultivating the study of character, and in creating a universal language by which the English-speaking race can find expression for their common humanity.

In so far as this is the work of a dramatist, Shakespeare stands alone. The Greeks had three great tragedians—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—who stand on something like equality. Special opinions and tastes may place one before the others, but still they form a group. The Germans have Goethe and Schiller, both men of the first rank. But between Shakespeare and any other English dramatic writer the distance is immense. He ranks, indeed, far higher than any of those we have just mentioned, whether Greek or German; but we have no other who is worthy of being compared with them.

Shakespeare is one of those great men whose lives have changed the destiny of the world, and made it different from what it would have been. But his power is not in the outward and visible, like that of Alexander the Great and Tamerlane, great conquerors who have altered the fates of nations and of empires. It is rather in the spirit which inspires the inner life of man, and which, though slowly, ever moulds the outward and the material.

There is a law in the production of great men. They sometimes appear in groups, and at other times they stand alone. Certain periods are prolific of men of

genius. The age that is peculiarly fertile of great men is the transition stage between grand epochs—the age of revolution. At such a time the wants of the age are a kind of craving that must be satisfied, and sum up all the utmost powers of all the typical men. It is a time, too, of great expectation. Men's minds are looking for something unusual about to happen in the world, they know not what. All this was peculiarly characteristic of Shakespeare's age. It was one in which thrones were falling—a time when old times were going to dissolution, and a new era was being ushered in with great and portentous events. We may compare society to one of the grand volcanic mountains, *Ætna* or *Hecla*. After a slumber of centuries there comes a short period of violent eruptions, and then they settle down again into the former state of repose, with great changes in the face of nature. Thus society has its long periods of repose followed by revolutions. In fact, the history of nations, like that of individuals, is a succession of epochs. The institutions, the laws, and even the religious beliefs of one age have a period within which they develop, flourish, and decay. A new age, of a totally different and often of an antagonistic character, then follows, in which everything is changed. Between these epochs there is a transitional state, which is usually prolific of great men. Some have their mission to pull down and destroy the old. Others are awakened to meet the felt wants of the new, and it is their work to give character and shape to the new. Once and again, at such a point, there appears a mind of transcendent power, whose part

relation to the past seems to be that of giving it a nobler and an immortal existence before it has sunk into utter oblivion, while its relations to the future are not so much with the age just succeeding as with all time. Such was Homer, and at such a point did he live. Several generations had passed away since the famous siege of Troy, the age was changing, and nothing would have been saved from the wrecks of time but the names of a few illustrious heroes, when Homer appeared to embalm the perishing traditions in his immortal epic poems the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." In these he has painted with extraordinary power the manners, customs, institutions, and characteristics of the heroic age, and given mankind the knowledge of a portion of their history which otherwise would have been totally forgotten. This, however, is the poet in one aspect only.

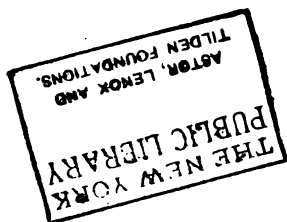
Similar in character and position was Shakespeare. He stands midway between darkness and light, between an age when religion was a thing of gorgeous shows and pageants, a ritual rendered imposing by solemn fanes and Gothic piles, and that age when it returned to be an inward life, a moral power, which showed itself in spiritual worship and holiness of life. And the man Shakespeare has a phase of both. He combines the splendid pictorial imagination which is nurtured by the pomp and pageantry of the one with the just views of man and of truth which are the product of the other. Remarks of an altogether similar character might be made regarding his stand-point between the fall of feudalism and the rise of freedom. Were as

great a dramatist to live in our times, who found characters for his dramas, it could not be either in proud baronial halls or in the court for neither of these is to us romantic. Already the Middle Ages had come to a close, a new epoch had begun, but this in England was far advanced as to prevent the former age from imposing its character on the youthful mind of genius. He had seen the Moralities, the spectacles, pantomimes, and histories, as we call tragedies and comedies, which were characteristic of the previous period, and most of which were during his time and soon vanished. Out of the materials his creative mind constructed the drama in its perfect form. Nor had the events, which filled the later portion of Queen Elizabeth's reign and banished the recollection of the Roses, happened too soon relatively to the poet to prevent him from catching an echo from popular traditions. He has reproduced the spirit of those times and of bygone English history in his Historical plays with a vividness and a power no mere historian could do who had not the inspiration of living and lingering recollections.

Undoubtedly, therefore, the character of the age which preceded the Reformation gave a stamp to the productions of Shakespeare's genius, and affected its essential nature. Had not circumstances influenced his personal history, and possibly the want of a definite direction as felt by a mind like his, given him a definite direction of the drama, his genius would



SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE - STRATFORD ON AVON.

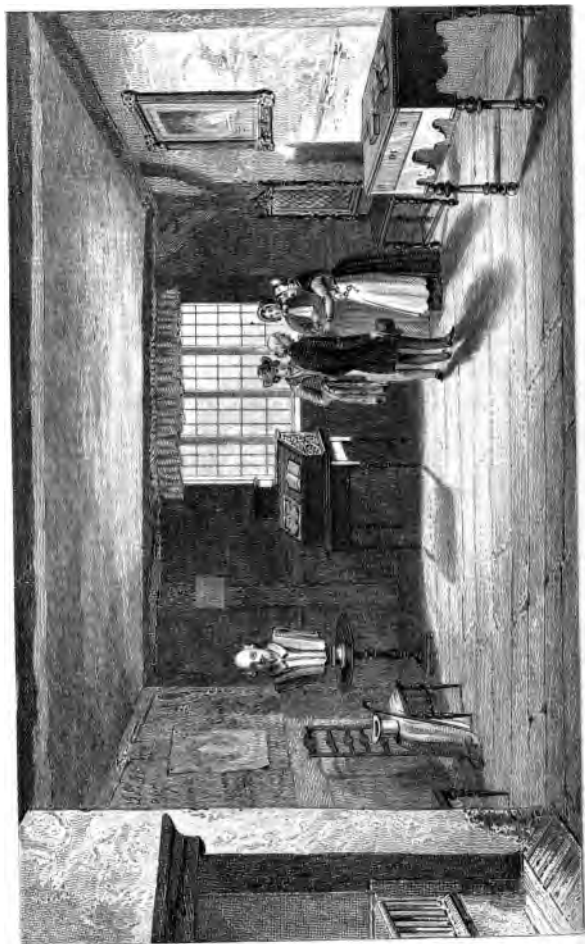


other channel. He would still have painted human character and human feeling with a master-hand, and all in sublime and impassioned language have taught mankind to know themselves. Before passing on to relate what is known of the history and life of the man Shakespeare, we may refer in a sentence or two to one whose position in some points is similar—Sir Walter Scott. He lived in a transition age, when feudalism had already gone to dissolution and was fast becoming forgotten. His magic pen called once more to existence the age of chivalry, and peopled the crumbling castles and ruined baronial halls with the proud barons, the chivalrous knights, and the courtly dames of the olden times. The age in which honour was the ruling principle still teaches us its important lessons, which, but for this great novelist, would have been buried in oblivion.

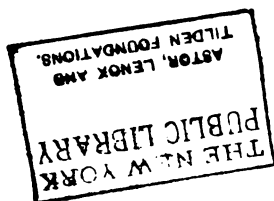
We return to speak of the ancestors, and specially now of the youth of the Bard of Avon, and we remark at the outset that, after all, the life of Shakespeare is a great myth. That we are not absolutely without materials, is true; but we know less about the parentage, the education, the everyday life, the habits and personal appearance of our own Shakespeare, than we do of Socrates the father of philosophy.

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-upon-Avon early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The day of his baptism was 26th April 1564, and in all probability his birthday was St. George's Day, 23d April. His father, John Shakespeare, was a substantial yeoman, and possessed at this time two tenements in

Stratford, the house and lands of Ashbies, besides share of a property at Snitterfield in the right of his wife. He is the first Shakespeare whom we know positively to belong to Stratford, although it is possible that his great-grandfather may have settled there. The evidence for this is based on two drafts of a grant of arms made to John Shakespeare, still preserved in the College of Arms, one of which, dated 1596, runs thus: "his parentes and late antecessors were for there valiant and faithfull service aduanced and rewarded by the most prudent prince King Henry the Seventh of famous memorie, sythence whiche tyme they have continued at those parts in good reputacion and credit. The other, dated 1599, reads that his "parent, great-grandfather, and late antecessor, for his faithfull and approved service to the late most prudent prince King Henry the 7. of famous memorie, was aduanced and rewarded &c." It has been inferred from this that an ancestor of Shakespeare had fought on the side of Henry of Richmond at Bosworth Field, where the tyrant and arrogant villain Richard III. met his doom, and had been rewarded with lands and tenements for his valiant services. But on the other hand it is maintained, that as, on examination of the rolls of Henry VII.'s reign, no trace of advancement or reward to any person named Shakespeare can be found, the expressions in the grant of arms refer to the Ardens, who were certainly rewarded by Henry VII., especially Robert Arden, the grandfather of Mary Arden, who became the wife of John Shakespeare. On this hypothesis Richard Shakespeare of Snitterfield, a tenant of Robert Arden,



CHAMBER IN SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE - STRATFORD ON AVON.



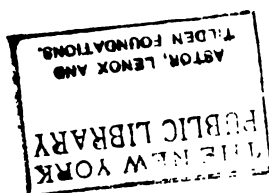
supposed to be the father of John Shakespeare; and if so, it can easily be understood how the latter became connected with Mary Arden, the mother of the poet. It is certainly difficult to decide between these conflicting views. We have said that Mary Arden was the wife of John Shakespeare. She was the youngest daughter of Robert Arden of Wilmecote. The family of Arden boasts of considerable antiquity in Warwickshire, and had various branches. The surname Arden was taken from a forest of that name. It was probably in 1557 that the marriage of John Shakespeare took place. He was undoubtedly a yeoman whose chief concern was with agricultural matters, although he may have been also a glover for a short period at least. He is also called a dealer in wool, and this is not inconsistent with his being a yeoman, who farmed property of his own besides what he held in lease. In the corporation of Stratford he held various offices, rising from one to another until he reached that of high bailiff. Altogether, he must have been a man of some consideration in the place, and his affairs at the birth of his first son William, and for many years after, were in a flourishing condition. His family consisted of Joan and Margaret, who died in infancy; then William; and following him Gilbert; a second Joan; Richard; Anne, who died; and Edmund. Another John Shakespeare, a shoemaker, lived in Stratford, notices of whose children in the register gave rise to the idea that the children of John and Mary Shakespeare were ten in all. However, the father of our poet is distinguished from his namesake by the "Mr." prefixed to his name.

To the above account of Shakespeare's parentage may add the fact, that most likely neither of his parents could write. This is borne out by the circumstance that to important documents only their mark, and not their signature, is attached ; but in this age very many persons of good condition were equally ignorant of the important art.

Grammar School



GUILD CHAPEL & GRAMMAR SCHOOL - STRATFORD ON AVON.



CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD AND SCHOOL-DAYS. 1571-1579.

Shakespeare's boyhood—He is silent about himself—Educated at the Free Grammar School of Stratford—School founded in 1482—Kept in the Chapel of the Guild—The extent of Shakespeare's classical education—His knowledge of nature and of character—Stratford names and characters in his plays—Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth.

OF Shakespeare's boyhood and youth we know hardly anything, except by inference, and he himself gives us no information. Goethe, in his "Autobiography," has given the most minute details of his early life. Looking back on his youth, he depicts the pleasures, the dreams, and the aspirations of "the boy," and creates anew the ideal world in which he lived. But of himself Shakespeare is either silent or speaks obscurely. In the creations of his wonderful mind, men see themselves as in a mirror, but they see not the personality of the genius that created these pictures of human life. We have certainly a few trifling facts regarding the youth of Shakespeare; but if we would really know anything about his education, and the forming of his mind, we are thrown back on a study of old English life in Queen Elizabeth's time as the only reliable source.

There can be no doubt he was educated at the free school of Stratford. A grammar school for giving instruction in Greek and Latin had existed there from the time of Edward IV., having been founded in 1482

by Thomas Jolyffe, and it was afterwards chartered by Edward VI. Between 1570 and 1580, Walter Roche, Thomas Hunt, and Thomas Jenkins, were masters in succession, and as this was Shakespeare's school period, these must have been his instructors. It is probable that at this time the school was kept in the Chapel of the Guild, and not in the Grammar School, for in the corporation books there is an entry against the date February 18, 1594-5: "At this hall it was agreed by the bailiff and the greater number of the company now present, that there shall be no school kept in the chapel from this time following." Whether this occupation of the chapel as a school was temporary or permanent, there is a "possibility of a sly notice of his school-master in *Twelfth Night*, Act iii., Scene 2, where the dramatist describes Malvolio as in yellow stockings and most villanously cross-gartered, 'like a pedant that keeps a school i' the church.'" The only notice of Shakespeare's education at that second act on the stage of human life, of which he says,—


"And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school,"

is in Ben Jonson's "*Verses to his Memory*," in which the line occurs,—

"And though thou hadst small Latine and lesse Greeke."

It would be absurd to infer from this that Shakespeare's education in the classical tongues was grossly defective, and that he knew the authors of antiquity only through the medium of the wretched translations then in existence. It is true he did not fill his dramas

with pedantic stuff and learned conceits after Ben Jonson's fashion. His genius was essentially creative, and therefore above slavish imitation. Still, if he was not a learned man in classic lore, the exact knowledge of the Roman character and of the institutions of Rome which he shows in "Julius Cæsar" and "Coriolanus," and of classical antiquity in other plays, is a proof that his information was not had at second-hand, or at least that he had the power of verifying it by a study of the originals. As he was at a grammar school perhaps till his fourteenth year, how could he fail to acquire a competent knowledge of Latin at least, where that language must have been the staple of education? Probably the Bible had been the book upon which his home education was grounded. Whatever may have been the extent of his acquirements at school, his real education was the observation of nature and of human character. In none of his plays, it is true, have we that exquisite picturing of giant hills and placid lakes, of forest and glacier, of smiling pasture-lands and scenes of wild desolation, which we have in Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell," the work of a more descriptive poet; but everywhere amid things of a much higher character, we find nature painted with the most delicate touches. Of the extraordinary minuteness of his observation, a thousand illustrations might be given. With all the phenomena of nature, with the natural history of plants and animals, with the skill of the gardener and all the labours of the husbandman, he is most familiar. But he is no less at home in the manners, customs, pastimes, and occupations of men. Yet, however perfect the great



dramatist is in his knowledge of the outer world, and of mankind as seen from without, his proper sphere is the human heart. His comprehension of character—his insight into the motives, the secret workings, the feelings of the human mind—is the most astonishing thing about him. Even of woman's heart he describes the impulses, the aims, the weaknesses, as if he felt those things. None of his characters are described objectively. In all, the mind that fashions them is not seen: it enters into them, and looks from their point of view. Now, it is in youth that these impressions of character are got, although they come in at that time as raw materials only, which are afterwards to be fashioned by the plastic power of imagination. It is only in youth that a man can see the character and imbibe the spirit of a people; and this is the chief reason why a foreigner can never thoroughly comprehend the genius of a nation. Had those writers who have made it their business to grasp the individuality of Shakespeare's characters but lived at Stratford-upon-Avon, they would have found the types of many of those that play their part on an ideal stage. It is ascertained that there were originals for most of Sir Walter Scott's characters, who were very well known to his neighbours and his personal friends, and in this point Shakespeare did not differ from other mortals. Halliwell points out, on the authority of extant documents, that Bardolf and Fluellen were names well known in his native Stratford, and also that Sly, Herne, Horne, Brome, Page, and Ford, are names found in MSS. in the Council Chamber there. He adds

that Herne the Hunter is called *Horne* in the first sketch of the "Merry Wives," and that *Brome* will be found to be Ford's assumed name in the first folio.

Among the events which took place in Shakespeare's schoolboy-days, and which would doubtless awaken his youthful imagination, was Queen Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth in the summer of 1575. On this occasion she was entertained with regal magnificence by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Everything was present which might contribute to the pleasures of the court. Splendid shows, dramatic entertainments, plays and spectacles, succeeded one another, and were varied by the pastimes of bear-fights and the chase. There was a great concourse from the surrounding country, and as Stratford is only fourteen miles from Kenilworth, and the shows lasted a number of days, there is every reason to think that young Shakespeare, then in his twelfth year, was present. Among the shows, there was one, according to Gascoigne, in which "Triton, in likeness of a mermaid, came towards the Queen's Majesty." "Arion appeared sitting on a dolphin's back." The probability that the future dramatist was present on this occasion is increased by the occurrence of a passage in "Midsummer Night's Dream," which seems to allude to this scene by the lake at Kenilworth:—

OVER. I . . . heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath.

Cupid all arm'd; a certain aim he took

At a fair vestal throned by the west;

And the imperial votaress passed on,

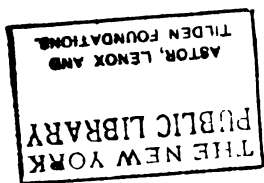
In maiden meditation, fancy free.

ACT I., SCENE 2.

The allusion here to the maiden queen is not obscure. Spectacles like these must have had a wonderful effect on the mind of a boy in whom that imagination must even then have begun to play which afterwards became so rich and gorgeous.



INTERIOR OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL - STRATFORD ON AVON.



CHAPTER III.

YOUTH TO MANHOOD. 1579-1586.

Occupation of Shakespeare after leaving school—Was he apprenticed to a butcher?—Aubrey—Was he a schoolmaster?—Was he articled to an attorney?—The Topers and Sippers of Bidford—Quartett ascribed to Shakespeare—His marriage—Its haste and secrecy—Anne Hathaway—This union, whether or not a happy one.

WE have no means of ascertaining the exact year in which Shakespeare left the grammar school of Stratford. It is stated by Rowe that "the narrowness of his father's circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language (Latin)." Although the evidence is conflicting, we think, on the whole, the proof conclusive, that about 1579 John Shakespeare's affairs were not in a flourishing condition. At or before this time he may have withdrawn his son from school, not so much from the expense of maintaining him, since the education was free, as that, finding he could not give him a learned education, he must needs send his son betimes to some other occupation. What calling the youthful Shakespeare followed after from his leaving school till the time he went to London is extremely uncertain. We may here insert some curious statements on this point, found in Aubrey's MSS. in the Ashmolean Museum. He says, "Mr. William Shakespear was born at Strat-

ford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick ; his father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade ; but when he killed a calf, he would do it in a high style, and make a speech." There is, however, a slightly different version of the story. In 1693, a clerk of the parish church at Stratford, then eighty years old, affirmed, in pointing to his monument, that "this Shakespeare was formerly in this town bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he ran from his master to London." Probably Aubrey had this old clerk for his authority, and the point in which there is a variation of the stories, is most likely a fictitious addition of the narrators, to explain what the youth Shakespeare had to do with killing a calf. His father, as a yeoman, might kill his own calves, as other yeomen did, and there is certainly an air of truth about the story that William Shakespeare, in killing a calf, would do it in a high style, and make a speech.* This is just what we would expect from the dramatic turn of his mind, and the natural eloquence of his fluent tongue. It is very unlikely, however, that John Shakespeare was ever a butcher, or that his son was apprenticed to one.

Another statement of Aubrey, for which he cites Mr. Beeston as his authority, is to the effect that, "though Shakespeare, as Ben Jonson says of him, had but little Latin and less Greek, he understood Latin pretty well ; for he had been in his younger days a schoolmaster in

* See, however, another hypothesis at page 81.

the country." Collier, in admitting the probability of this, ingeniously conjectures that Shakespeare had been employed by Jenkins, the master of the grammar school from 1577 to 1580, to aid him in the instruction of the junior boys.

It has been supposed by Malone, an opinion in which Collier and others concur, that Shakespeare, during some portion of the time between his leaving school and his setting out for London, was engaged in the office of an attorney. This is perfectly consistent with the hypothesis, probable on other grounds, that he assisted his father in his agricultural pursuits, since it was natural and usual then, as it is now, for a gentleman-farmer to place his son in a lawyer's office, in order to sharpen his wits, and qualify him for engaging in business transactions. As the elder Shakespeare was a trader of some sort as well as a cultivator, his son may have had the intention of becoming an attorney, in addition to holding land. The evidence adduced in favour of his legal education is chiefly derived from his plays, in which law phrases and allusions abound. There was at that time in Stratford a Court of Record, which had jurisdiction in personal causes not exceeding £30—equal to three times the amount according to the present value of money. Seven attorneys, including the town-clerk, practised in this court; and it was probably here that Shakespeare acquired his legal knowledge. The external evidence that Shakespeare was articled to an attorney is of a very meagre kind, if taken alone. The first proof may be founded on an application of the method of exhaustion. If he was not occupied thus, in what

else was he engaged between his fifteenth and his twenty-third year? The story of his being an apprentice to a butcher is really too puerile to deserve a serious refutation. The extraordinary extent and variety of his knowledge show that Shakespeare's genius must have been early developed; and can we conceive that a youth of his talent could engage in such a sorry trade? The only other external proof, if we except the fact that the poet wrote a good court hand, is an allusion in an Epistle by Thomas Nash, prefixed to Robert Greene's "Menaphon," published in 1589. Nash says: "It is a common practice now-a-days, amongst a sort of shifting companions, that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of NOVERINT, whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the endeavours of art, that could scarcely Latinize their neck verse, if they should have need: yet English Seneca, read by candlelight, yields many good sentences, as *Blood is a beggar*, and so forth; and if you intreate him fair in a frostie morning, he will afford you whole Hamlets—I should say handfuls of tragical speeches." The trade of NOVERINT is that of an attorney, which is called so satirically from the words with which Latin deeds commence: "*Noverint* universi per presentes, &c.—Let all men know by these presents, &c." It is by no means certain that Shakespeare is referred to here—an objection having been raised on the ground that Greene's "Menaphon" was first published in 1587, which would be too early to refer to our poet. It may be said, in reply to this objection, however, that the Epistle of Nash has not been shown in any copy older than 1589;

and there is a decided probability that Shakespeare is the object of attack, from the circumstance that Nash's friend Greene is the same who grossly libelled the rival dramatist three years later, in his "*Groatsworth of Wit*," where he calls him the *Johannes Fac-totum* of his company, in his own conceit the only *Shake-scene* in a country, and, moreover, "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers." The "*Hamlet*" alluded to could not have been the play as we now have it, but only the first crude form of it. Upon the whole, however, it must be admitted that the external evidence is not very conclusive. Probable proofs of a more satisfactory kind are found in his plays, that Shakespeare in early life had familiar acquaintance with the lawyer's art. The subject has been elaborately discussed by Lord Campbell, in an interesting volume, entitled "*Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements Considered*." It is unnecessary to quote here instances of legal terms and phrases from the great dramatist; but we may remark, by way of generalization from an examination of those quoted by Lord Campbell, that Shakespeare shows such a knowledge of law, and uses technical terms with such precision, and otherwise, where his subject did not demand it, introduces legal allusions in an incidental manner in such a way, as to lead us to infer that he must have had, somehow or other, a legal education. We take one example from "*Hamlet*," where that prince, moralizing in the churchyard on a skull just thrown up by the sexton, says to his friend Horatio—

"Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he

suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Humph! this fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more?" —ACT V., *Scene 1.*

It is certainly quite possible that Shakespeare may have acquired his legal knowledge otherwise than we have supposed; but there is special force in his casual allusions in favour of the hypothesis above mentioned. These can be accounted for only from inwrought and familiar knowledge.

There is a local tradition about one of Shakespeare's youthful adventures, which must be referred to this period. It seems Bidford, a village on the banks of the Avon, seven miles below Stratford, was the rendezvous of a fraternity of hard drinkers, called the Topers and the Sippers. These merry Bacchanalians challenged all far and near to try the strength of their heads at drinking strong ale. To explain the existence of such a fraternity, we must go back to older institutions, which had by this time decayed, although the usages which grew out of them still remained. In certain towns, as the Puritan Stubbes tells us, against Christmas and Easter, Whitsuntide, or some other time, the churchwardens of every parish provide half a score or twenty quarters of malt, some purchased out of the church stock, and some being given by the parishioners themselves. This malt is made into very strong ale or beer, and is set to sale, either in the church or some other

place assigned for that purpose. Aubrey, speaking of a festivity of the same sort, called a Church-Ale, says, that in every parish there was a church-house, to which belonged spits, crocks, and other utensils for cookery; and that here the housekeepers met and were merry, and gave their charity, while the young people had dancing, bowling, shooting at butts, and so forth, the ancients sitting gravely by and looking on. The main design of these meetings had been, we suppose, the encouragement of archery. While the long-bow was a powerful warlike implement, the free yeomen of England were carefully trained to its use, and the bowmen of a district met at certain set times for a trial of skill. These meetings at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, and other occasions, had also purposes to serve in connection with the festivals of the Romish Church. At the time of which we are now speaking, which was the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the introduction of gunnery had superseded the long-bow, and the Romish festivals had been interdicted in the now Protestant Church of England. Still the old usages and merry meetings held their ground against new inventions and a new worship. In festivities of this sort the Topers and Sippers of Bidford had earned the fame of standing an unusual amount of ale without becoming intoxicated. Will Shakespeare and the Stratford band had resolved to put the skill of the Topers to the test, and for that purpose repaired to Bidford on a Whitsun Monday. They had the misfortune to miss them, for the Topers were gone to Evesham Fair on a similar errand, and accordingly they were obliged to content themselves with the

Sippers. However, they found themselves overmatched even by them, and the party from Stratford, getting dreadfully intoxicated, gave up the contest, and set out for home. On the road, at the distance of half a mile from the village, Will became so knocked up that he was obliged to spend the night under a crab-tree, known afterwards as Shakespeare's Tree. On being invited next morning by some of his boon-companions to return to Bidford, with the view of renewing the contest, Shakespeare refused. Says he, I have drunk enough with

"Piping Pebworth, dancing Marston,
Haunted Hillborough, hungry Grafton,
Dudging Exhall, Papist Wicksford,
Beggary Broom, and drunken Bidford."

These lines, which are quite familiar to the country-people, are uniformly ascribed to Shakespeare. They indicate that the Bidford Sippers were composed of representatives from all these villages; and it is asserted that the various appellations were characteristic of the several places, and that some of them still are so.

Pebworth was noted for the musical gifts of its inhabitants; Marston, for its country-dances; Hillborough, a lonely place, is said to have been haunted by ghosts and fairies; hungry, as an epithet applied to Grafton, may refer to the poverty of its soil; dudging, means sulky, stubborn, in dudgeon, and was probably a characteristic of the Exhall villagers; in Papist Wicksford, the people were tenants of the Throckmorton family, and were chiefly Papists; beggary, may signify mean—a point of character at Broom;

Bidford, the head-quarters of the Topers and Sippers, is worthily named drunken.

Hitherto, in narrating the events of Shakespeare's life, we have been guided solely by the light of uncertain tradition. We now come to his marriage, the next fact in his history after his baptism which is established on indubitable evidence. This event took place in his nineteenth year. It is not known in what church the ceremony was performed, as no registration of the marriage has been found. That it must have been posterior to 28th November 1582, is evident from the date of the preliminary marriage-bond. The object of this bond, procured from the Bishop of Worcester at the above-mentioned date, was for licensing William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway to be married on a single proclamation of the banns of matrimony. Collier says, "It is not to be concealed or denied that the whole proceeding seems to indicate haste and secrecy." This opinion is probably well founded. Anne Hathaway was at this time at the age of twenty-six, and therefore Shakespeare's senior by seven or eight years. Tradition describes her as eminently beautiful, but for this there is no certainty. She is designated in the marriage-bond as of Stratford, although it is likely she did not belong to the town, but came from Shottery, which is within the parish. The cottage is still in existence which tradition points to as her home. The general opinion is, that Shakespeare's marriage was not a happy one, although this conclusion has been strenuously denied. One of the points on which the opinion has been grounded, is the circumstance that no notice is taken of

his wife by Shakespeare in his Will, except the following:—"Item, I gyve unto my wief my second best bed, with the furniture," and even this is an interlineation. The meagreness of this bequest is brought out by the next sentence but one in the Will: "All the rest of my goodes, chattel, leases, plate, jewels, and household stufte whatsoever, I gyve, devise, and bequeathe to my sonne-in-lawe, John Hall, gent., and my daughter Susanna, his wief, whom I ordaine and make executors of this my last will and testament." Mr. Knight points out that Shakespeare's widow would be provided for by the clear and undeniable operation of the English law, and suggests that the *best* bed was probably an heirloom. Allowing that such was the case, the omission of Anne Hathaway's name in regard to all save the second best bed, with the furniture, in a Will full of bequests of a complimentary kind—such as money to purchase rings—indicates that somehow she had lost, in later life at least, the respect of her husband. The absence of any evidence that she ever resided with her husband during his protracted stays in London, is to the same effect. But, on the other hand, a great deal too much stress has been laid on the disparity between their ages; and some have supposed that the passage in "Twelfth Night," where the Duke says to Viola—

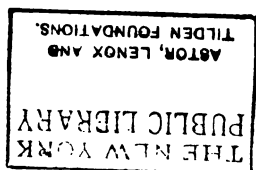
"Let still the woman take
An elder than herself: so wears she to him;
So sways she level in her husband's heart."

ACT II., Scene 4.

refers to Shakespeare's own experience. We think, however, that this disparity could not have been the



ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE - STRATFORD ON AVON.



cause of an estrangement, for it would have been felt only for a year or two, and if older in point of years, she was younger than her husband in strength, as appears from her outliving him by seven years. It is in favour of the same side of the question, that Shakespeare always made Stratford his permanent home, and retired to settle there with his family after he had risen to affluence. On the whole, however, be the case as it may, it is clear the home influences never had any great power in moulding the character of the great dramatist.

What business Shakespeare followed after from and even before the time of his marriage till he set out for London, is matter of the utmost uncertainty. If we may judge from an incident which happened near the close of this period, his manner of life must have been somewhat unsettled. "He had," as Rowe tells us, "by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and amongst them some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him." Additional circumstances are given in other accounts, such as that Shakespeare was confined in the keeper's lodge after his detection, and that the ballad written in ridicule of Sir Thomas was stuck upon his park gate. There can be no reasonable doubt that this story is true in the main. Besides a concurrence of traditions coming through different

channels, there is strong evidence of its truth from certain passages in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," and in Part ii. of "Henry IV." From an allusion in the latter play, Act iii., Scene 2, it is perfectly evident that Justice Shallow is intended to be a caricature of Sir Thomas Lucy. Falstaff says, "If the young dace be a bait for the old pike, I see no reason, in the law of nature, but I may snap at him." The point of the allusion here lies in the fact that three luces, or pike-fishes, were emblazoned on Sir Thomas Lucy's coat-of-arms. At the commencement of the "Merry Wives of Windsor," Justice Shallow exclaims: "Sir Hugh, persuade me not: I will make a Star-chamber matter of it"—namely, of Falstaff's having beaten his men, killed his deer, and broken open his lodge. Bardolf, Nym, and Pistol, followers of Falstaff, are also called "coney-catching rascals;" and rabbit-stealing is associated, too, with deer-stealing in the tradition. Slender's reference to "the dozen white luces" in the coat of Shallow's ancestors, identifies the latter with Lucy, although a dozen is put for three. Collier points out that *white* refers to "three luces hariant, *argent*," of the coat-of-arms of the Lucys.

From the cutting sarcasms levelled against Sir Thomas Lucy, and from allusions to the killing of his deer, and his intention to make a Star-chamber matter of it, we cannot avoid the inference that Shakespeare had been involved in an unpleasant deer-stealing affair, and that his resentment had been kindled by the treatment he received in consequence. We are not to consider deer-stealing as an act of robbery committed for gain,

but rather as closely allied to a breach of the game-laws. The story of Davies, that Lucy had Shakespeare often whipped and sometimes imprisoned for stealing venison and rabbits, is palpably false. Shakespeare's making merry of the pompous Justice is totally inconsistent with the soreness which he must have felt towards Sir T. Lucy if he had been whipped and imprisoned at his instance. Nor would the dramatist, when he acquired a fortune, and set up as a Gentleman, have returned to his native Stratford to do so, had there been any stain on his fair fame, such as the story of Davies would make out.

Probably Rowe's statement, that Lucy's persecution was so bitter, owing to the ballad stuck on his gate, as to compel Shakespeare to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London, is so far correct. Most likely this was the event which decided him ; but we have good reason to conclude that there were other grounds for his taking the course he did. Halliwell* has proved, "that in March, 29 Eliz., 1587, Shakespeare's father was in prison, for on the 29th day of that month he produced a writ of *habeas corpus* in the Stratford Court of Record." Previous to this he had been in pecuniary difficulties.

Shakespeare, ere the time of his leaving for London, had seen that his father's agricultural profession held out no prospects whatever for him, and if he followed the business of attorney, or some other such like, as his

* Page 134 compare with pp. 43, 44.

only profession, and not as a mere secondary one to the other, he had no prospect of success, not to speak of its being thoroughly distasteful to him. He had, no doubt, come to the conclusion that he must seek his fortune in some other sphere than the narrow, ill-conditioned one of Stratford-upon-Avon. The growing ambition of a mind like his would make him gravitate towards the metropolis, the only place where a new and an aspiring genius could find the outward conditions for its development. He probably required only the pressure of necessity to make him face the difficulties of a journey, and an entrance on a new mode of life. Aubrey is silent about the deer-stealing affair, and says merely, "This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess about eighteen, and was an actor at one of the play-houses, and did act exceedingly well." Besides Shakespeare's natural inclination to poetry and acting, there are other ways of accounting for his subsequent connection with the Blackfriars Theatre in London. As we learn from the accounts of the Chamberlain, the corporation of Stratford gave considerable countenance to the representation of plays during the period of Shakespeare's boyhood and youth. In 1569, when Shakespeare was five years old, and his father chief magistrate, the Queen's players received 9s. The Earl of Leicester's players, of whom James Burbage was the leader, received 6s. 8d. in 1573. In the following year, the Earl of Warwick's men were paid 17s., and those of the Earl of Worcester 6s. 7d. To omit mention of others in the intermediate years, in 1587 no fewer than five companies received

gratuities. We also happen to know how it came about that corporation funds were expended on such objects. In 1639, R. Willis, then seventy-five, and consequently born in the same year with Shakespeare, published a volume called "Mount Tabor," in which the following passage occurs, explanatory of that circumstance :—"In the city of Gloucester, the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations), that when players of enterludes come to town, they first attend the mayor, to inform him what nobleman's servants they are, and so get license for their public playing ; and if the mayor like the actors, or would show respect to their lord and master, he appoints them to play their first play before himself and the aldermen and common council of the city ; and that is called the mayor's play, where every one that will, comes in without money, the mayor giving the players a reward as he thinks fit, to show respect unto them." It is easy to see, from the numerous representations which took place at Stratford, that Shakespeare must have been quite familiar with plays and players ; and it is also worthy of note, that several of the players with whom he was afterwards associated belonged to Stratford or to the immediate neighbourhood. It has been ascertained that James Burbage, one of the original builders of the Blackfriars Theatre, came from Warwickshire. His son, Richard Burbage, was a friend of Shakespeare's subsequently, and acted many of the chief characters in his plays. Thomas Greene, a comic actor, known as "Tu quoque," came from Stratford, and perhaps there were others.

Looking at the causes which led Shakespeare to leave Stratford for London, we may conclude that, if Sir Thomas Lucy's hostility was the more immediate occasion of his departure at the moment he did, still he was carrying out a premeditated plan, which would some day have been put in execution, although the above mentioned affair had never happened.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC LIFE—TILL WELL KNOWN AS A DRAMATIST.
1586-1591.

Shakespeare goes to London—Shakespeare's boys—Probable foundation of the story—He enters Blackfriars Theatre—Style of the olden theatres—Greene's Groatworth of Wit—Shakespeare a Fac-totum—His dramas in relation to pre-existing materials—Homer the last of a race of bards—Chettle's apology for Greene.

It was probably in the end of 1586 that Shakespeare bade adieu to his native Stratford, and set out to enter on the world's stage, where he was to play so distinguished a part. The first authentic account we have of him in London is not, however, till three years after this, when we find him a sharer in the Blackfriars theatre. Before mentioning the probable cause of his connection with that theatre, and the mode in which he was at first employed in it, we shall quote a story given by the writer of a *Life of Shakespeare* published in 1753. The story is said to have come from Sir William Davenant through the actor Betterton. It is to this effect: "When Shakespeare came to London, he was without money and friends, and being a stranger he knew not to whom to apply, nor by what means to support himself. At that time coaches not being in use, and as gentlemen were accustomed to ride to the play-house, Shakespeare, driven to the last necessity, went to the play-house door, and picked up a little money by taking care of the gentlemen's horses who

came to the play. He became eminent even in that profession, and was taken notice of for his diligence and skill in it. He had soon more business than he himself could manage, and at last hired boys under him, who were known by the name of 'Shakespeare's boys.' Some of the players, accidentally conversing with him, found him so acute, and master of so fine a conversation, that, struck therewith, they introduced and recommended him to the house, in which he was first admitted in a very low station; but he did not long remain so, for he soon distinguished himself, if not as an extraordinary actor, at least as a fine writer." Dr. Johnson adds several circumstances, such as that Shakespeare held the horses as a waiter, and that the boys he hired announced themselves, "*I am Shakespeare's boy, sir.*" It would be easy to point out exceptional things in the complexion of this story, and especially in Dr. Johnson's additions. The number of horses which one man could hold, and that for an hour or two while the play lasted, would be small indeed. In fact, the whole story is somewhat incredible; but, as Halliwell observes, it is worthy of remark that the practice of riding to the theatres had long been discontinued when this story was written, and it is unlikely that a fabricator of the eighteenth century would have been acquainted with so minute a piece of antiquarian information. Perhaps the story may have some such foundation as this: Shakespeare must have begun at the lowest step, either as an apprentice or as an actor of inferior standing, and may have had charge of the department which included the calling of the horses. As they might be kept at some

distance, he behoved to summon the boys in charge before the conclusion of the play; and if any gentleman left during the course of the play, he would naturally apply to Shakespeare, or to whoever might be servitor for the time, and looked after those matters. Halliwell* quotes a letter of Dowdall, 1693, which states that Shakespeare was "received into the play-house as a serviture"—that is, as an apprentice to an actor of some standing, or as an inferior actor; and he subjoins an instance in point from Henslowe. We have no doubt that Shakespeare's connection with the Blackfriars theatre was owing to his being introduced by Thomas Greene, his townsman, or by Burbage and Nicholas Tooley, also Warwickshire men. Some notion may be formed of this Blackfriars theatre from the character of the inn-yard theatres, common a few years before it came into existence. At one end of the yard a platform was raised for the actors, and open galleries were run round it for those who paid the higher charge, while the others must content themselves with standing-room in the yard. The public theatres were modelled exactly after this fashion, the boxes being in those galleries, and the pit the open area where the spectators stood, or were accommodated with stools, for the use of which a charge was made. The Globe, a summer theatre, built by the company which owned the Blackfriars one, was roofless, except over the stage. The Blackfriars theatre, on the contrary, being adapted for winter performances, was roofed over. The stage had no

movable scenery. According to Collier, "tables, chairs, a few boards for a battlemented wall, or a rude structure for a tomb or an altar, seem to have been nearly all the properties it possessed." But it is worthy of remark, that since the times when the scenic representation was of the rudest description, the acting has gradually fallen off, as the devices of art have been progressively put forth to depict the external conditions of the drama which is being acted.

Between the end of 1586, the time when Shakespeare went to London, and November 1589, he had risen from being a servitor in the Blackfriars theatre to be a sharer; that is, one who shared in the division of the daily profits. Leaving out of view a possible allusion to the great dramatist in Spenser's "Tears of the Muses," published in 1591, the earliest contemporary notice of Shakespeare is in a work entitled, "A Groatsworth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance." It was written by Robert Greene, and published in 1592, after his death, by a fellow-dramatist, Henry Chettle. Urging Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele to cease writing for the stage, he says, "Base-minded men, all three of you, if by my misery yee bee not warned: for unto none of you (like me) sought those burs to cleave: those puppits, I mean, that speake from our mouthes, those Anties garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they have all been beholden,—is it not like that you, to whom they have all been beholden, shall (were yee in that case that I am now) be both of them at once forsaken?" Speaking more directly of Shakespeare, he adds, "Yes, trust them not; for there

is an upstart crow, *beautified with our feathers*, that with his *Tygre's heart, wrapt in a player's hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank-verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is, in his own conceit, the only *Shake-scene* in a country." This is obviously levelled at Shakespeare, under the play upon his name of Shake-scene. The words "tygre's heart, wrapt in a player's hyde," are, as Collier points out, a parody on a line in a historical play (most likely by Greene), "O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hyde," from which Shakespeare had taken his Henry VI., Part iii. We have here most important information given by a rival dramatist regarding Shakespeare at this early point in his development. He is called the Johannes Factotum of his company, and this establishes the fact of the extraordinary variety of his powers. The allusion in the words "beautified with our feathers," and in several expressions of the same import, is to Shakespeare's being an adapter and improver of the plays of other authors, Greene himself being no doubt among the number. There are two points of importance to be noted here; one being that many of the plays acted at the Blackfriars theatre, under the names of their original authors, were retouched and altered by Shakespeare; and the other, that many of Shakespeare's own dramas are based on older plays of a poorer and more meagre character. This is a view of Shakespeare's genius and works which deserves attention. It is impossible that one man could create such an extraordinary variety of characters, incidents, names,

and originate such a rich profusion of expression as we find within the compass of Shakespeare's dramas, if he had no pre-existing materials. In fact, we must look on the great dramatist as having fallen heir to all the spoils of the drama which preceded him, including both the groundwork and the language. There can be no doubt we ought to take the same view of Homer. Regarding him, there are two conflicting hypotheses. One is, that Homer was a poet who simply composed his epic poems out of the traditions which existed in his time. The other hypothesis denies that such a man as Homer ever existed, and maintains that the "Iliad" is a collection of heterogeneous poems, arranged by later critics and put under one name. Here, as in the case of many conflicting theories, the truth, no doubt, is to be found by combining both. Homer thus was the last of a race of bards who sung the wars of Troy and the deeds of ancient heroes, and it was the function of his sublime genius to blend all these fugitive poems into one, along with many original creations of his own, recasting the language of the older pieces. We think the same is true of Shakespeare. A little after the publication of Greene's piece, Chettle wrote a tract called, "Kindheart's Dream," in which, by way of apology for the attack just alluded to, he says of Shakespeare, "I myself have seen his demeanor no lesse civill than he [is] excellent in the qualitie he professes : besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, which approves his art." This shows how high a reputation Shakespeare had already acquired.

CHAPTER V.

PUBLIC LIFE—SECOND PERIOD. 1591-1610.

Venus and Adonis published in 1593—The Rape of Lucrece in 1594—Shakespeare in high favour with Queen Elizabeth and King James—Ben Jonson's allusion—Queen Elizabeth's glove—Falstaff in Merry Wives—Ben Jonson and Shakespeare—Jonson's Every Man in his Humour—Fuller on Shakespeare and Jonson—Criticism of Jonson on his friend—Meres' Wit's Treasury—Shakespeare's purchases in Stratford—Crown Inn, Oxford—He retires.

SEVERAL of Shakespeare's dramas had been published before 1591, among which, it is agreed, were the three parts of "Henry VI.;" but there is a want of harmony with regard to the order in which his other early plays appeared. Without stopping to discuss this question, we shall notice several points of interest in Shakespeare's public life from this time onwards to the period of his withdrawal to Stratford. It was in the spring of 1593 that his "Venus and Adonis" issued from the press, with a dedication to the Earl of Southampton. Probably it was this piece that procured him the friendship of that nobleman. His "Rape of Lucrece" appeared in 1594. He also attained high favour with Queen Elizabeth, before whom, as well as her successor, King James, he frequently acted. Ben Jonson alludes to this, where, in reference to the "Sweet swan of Avon," he speaks of

"Those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James."

There is a tradition, which we may here quote, that one evening in the theatre, while Shakespeare was personating the part of a king, Queen Elizabeth, in crossing the stage, moved politely to the poet without being duly recognised. To ascertain if this was intentional, she again passed the stage near him, and dropped her glove. This was at once taken up by Shakespeare, who, in closing a speech, added the two following lines, which seemed to form a part of it :—

"And though now bent on this high embassy,
Yet stoop we to take up our cousin's glove."

He then left the stage, and presented the glove to the queen, who is said to have been delighted with his ease and readiness, and to have complimented him for it. Rowe mentions that Elizabeth "was so well pleased with that admirable character of Falstaff in the two parts of 'Henry IV.,' that she commanded him to continue it for one play more, and show him in love : this is said to be the occasion of his writing the 'Merry Wives of Windsor.'" Dennis, who preceded Rowe by a few years, says that "this comedy ('Merry Wives of Windsor') was written at Elizabeth's command, and by her direction : and she was so eager to see it acted, that she commanded it to be finished in fourteen days."

But if court patronage was one of the influences which developed the genius of the great dramatist, a much more potent one was his converse with the famous wits of his time. Among these the first place is due to Ben Jonson. According to Rowe, their connection was brought about by "a remarkable piece of humanity

and good nature on the part of Shakespeare. Mr. Jonson, who was at that time altogether unknown to the world, had offered one of his plays to the players in order to have it acted, and the persons into whose hands it was put, after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, were just upon returning it to him with an ill-natured answer that it would be of no service to their company, when Shakespeare luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so well in it as to engage him first to read it through, and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the public." Jonson's play "Every Man in his Humour," was first performed at the Globe theatre in 1598, Shakespeare being one of the actors. Gifford attempts to show that this play was acted first in 1597, at a different theatre—an opinion which he supports by a passage out of Henslowe's Diary. It is satisfactorily proved by Collier, however, that Henslowe's "Humours," or "Umers" as he spells it, must have been an entirely different play from Jonson's. In his own authorized edition of his works in 1616, Ben Jonson positively states that his comedy of "Every Man in his Humour," was acted in the year 1598, by the then Lord Chamberlain's servants—namely, Shakespeare's company, and that it was acted for the *first* time in that year. This must be regarded as settling the question.

Such was the commencement of an intimate friendship between Shakespeare and rare Ben Jonson, which lasted during their lives. The place where their convivial meetings were held was, if we may trust tradition, the Falcon Tavern. Fuller in his "Worthies,"

published in 1662, characterizes the converse of these brilliant wits. Referring to Shakespeare he says, "Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war: Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in performances; Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." As Fuller was later than this time, he could not speak from his own observation, but we have every reason to believe that his delineation is a faithful one. Such specimens of these wit-combats as have come down to us by tradition, are altogether poor and unworthy of the men. It is not in tradition, but in the dramas of Shakespeare and Jonson, that we are to seek for the puns, jests, witticisms, and humorous raillery, which enlivened those brilliant conversations at the Falcon. The slowness and ponderous learning of Jonson stand in strong contrast with the fluency and fertile invention of Shakespeare, but they differ as much in other respects. Ben Jonson was a man of vigour and energy, and made a greater impression on those who came in close contact with them than "gentle Will." Their contemporaries, however, fully appreciated the difference between the genius of the poets, as appears from the scanty audiences that went to hear 'Sejanus' and 'Catiline,' compared with the enchanted throngs that crowded the theatre when Falstaff, or Malvolio came upon the stage. Jonson has made a noble tribute to the

memory of his departed friend, in those verses of which one of the most remarkable is:—

“He was not of an age, but for all time.”

Jonson has elsewhere spoken of Shakespeare with a freedom which brought on him the charge of envy, although without just cause. He says, “I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned), he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, Would he had blotted a thousand! Which they thought a malevolent speech. . . . He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasie, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped: *Sufflaminandus erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius.” The latter paragraph of this quotation is of extreme value. We have mentioned here of some of the most prominent characteristics of the great dramatist by one who knew him well, and was capable of comprehending his character. There is another notice of Shakespeare by a contemporary, which we may introduce here. Francis Meres, in a work entitled “*Palladis Tamia*” (Wit’s Treasury), informs us of twelve plays then (1598) known as Shakespeare’s. After remarking that as the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare, he adds, “As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latines, so Shakespeare among the English is the most

excellent in both kinds for the stage: for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love Labours Lost*, his *Love Labours Wonne*, his *Midsummer's Night Dreame*, and his *Merchant of Venice*: for tragedy, his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo and Juliet*."

Before the year 1597, Shakespeare had gradually risen in the Blackfriars theatre from occupying a humbler office, to be a sharer and ultimately a proprietor. By this time he had acquired considerable wealth, and he now hastens to invest it in houses and property at his native Stratford-upon-Avon. In 1597, he purchased from William Underhill, for £60, what was known as "the great house," or "New Place," consisting of one messuage, two barns, and two gardens with their appurtenances. In May 1602, he bought 107 acres of arable land, lying within the parish of Old Stratford, from William and John Combe, for £320; and in September of the same year, a house in Dead Lane, from Walter Getley. Within that year he also purchased a property from Hercules Underhill, which consisted of one messuage, two barns, two gardens, and two orchards. These various purchases show the wealth and consideration to which he had attained. His largest investment, however, took place in 1605, when he gave the sum of £440 to Ralphe Huband of Ippesley, Esquire, for half the tithes of Stratford, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, during the currency of an unexpired lease. The original grant of this lease took place in 1544, and was for a term of ninety-two years.

Shakespeare had been an actor, as well as a writer of plays. We do not know in how many different characters he appeared, but we have some evidence that he sustained the part of the Ghost in "Hamlet," and of Adam in "As You Like It." He was also one of the actors in Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," and also in his "Sejanus." He has the reputation of being a good actor, although in that sphere he was not of the first rank. The date of his ceasing to appear on the stage is probably 1604. He continued to reside in London for six or seven years after this time, however, and wrote a number of plays. It was his custom to spend some portion of the year at Stratford, and we must consider that place to have been his permanent home since 1597 at least. In his journeys between London and Stratford, he used to put up at the Crown Inn, as he passed through Oxford. Oldys relates, on the authority of Pope, that "the landlady was a woman of great beauty and sprightly wit, and her husband, Mr. John Davenant, a grave, melancholy man, who, as well as his wife, used much to delight in Shakespeare's pleasant company." Their son, Will Davenant, a boy of about seven or eight years old, used to fly from school to see Shakespeare. Davenant rose to some eminence as a poet, and was knighted for his loyalty in the civil war. He was to the last an ardent admirer of the great dramatist.

The time of Shakespeare's final withdrawal from London was in or near 1610. We have evidence of his having visited the metropolis repeatedly after this date, but he seems after that to have made Stratford his permanent residence.

CHAPTER VI.

RETIREMENT. 1610-1616.

Shakespeare retires to Stratford—His family—John-a-Combe—Epitaph on Sir T. Stanley—Careless regarding his Writings—Reason for non-publication—Folio of 1623—Carelessness a feature of spontaneous genius—Last days and death—Personal appearance—True sources for knowing his real life—as yet uninvestigated.

SOMEWHERE about the year 1610, as we have mentioned, Shakespeare retired from public life to spend the remainder of his days in tranquillity, and in the society of his friends, at his native Stratford. His wife and family must have resided here all along, for we have no evidence of their being in London. The members of his family consisted of Susanna, born in 1583, and Hamnet and Judith, twins, a boy and a girl, born in 1585. His son Hamnet died in 1596. Susanna, his eldest daughter, was married in 1607 to Mr. John Hall, gentleman, at Stratford. This was Shakespeare's favourite daughter. Her husband was a professor of medicine, and practised as a physician. The younger daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney, a vintner and wine merchant of Stratford. He was the son of Richard Quiney, some of whose pecuniary transactions with the poet have been recorded. This marriage took place in 1616, on 10th February, and was no doubt sanctioned by Shakespeare, as appears from the terms of his will.

The incidents known to us of Shakespeare's later

life are few and unimportant. Rowe says, "that the latter part of his life was spent, as all men of good sense will wish theirs may be, in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends." There is a well-known tradition regarding an epitaph which he wrote in jest for a neighbour of his, Mr. Combe. After some pleasantries in one of their conversations, Mr. Combe wished Shakespeare to inform him what epitaph he intended to write, should he survive him; on which Shakespeare gave the following satirical lines:—

"Ten in the hundred lies here in-grav'd;
'Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not sav'd.
If any man ask, Who lies in this tombe?
Oh! ho! quoth the devil, 'tis my John-a-Combe."

It is usually said that Mr. John Combe was so stung by the satire that he never forgave him. This is doubtful, as Mr. Combe's will contains a clause, "To Mr. William Shackspere, five pounds;" and the dramatist bequeathed his sword to Mr. Thomas Combe, a brother of the former. That Combe was a grinding usurer is also without positive proof, although he was a man of means who lent out his money at interest, and no doubt looked sharply after it. The story of his covetousness would gather way in a later age, from the idea of his charging a percentage which at that subsequent time would be reckoned exorbitant. In Shakespeare's time, however, ten per cent. was the legal and the ordinary rate of interest. It was a most delicate satire to term the money-lender "Ten in the hundred;" and we believe there was some foundation for the general imputation of covetousness, although the point of the witty epitaph does

not absolutely require the supposition. Combe would not feel the pungency of his friend's sarcasm, since he could not see himself as others saw him, and hence the story that he never forgave him is not only untrue but unnecessary. With regard to the rhyme of the epitaph, it may be noted that Combe was very commonly pronounced Coomb at that time. The name is derived from *coomb*, a four bushel measure. The word *in-grav'd*—put in his grave—is often absurdly enough printed *engraved*.

An epitaph inscribed on Sir Thomas Stanley's tomb, at Tongue church, is believed to be the composition of Shakespeare, but it does not appear at what time of his life it was written. Stanley died in 1576, and the epitaph is taken from Dugdale's Collection of Monumental Inscriptions in the County of Salop, 1663, preserved in the Herald's College.

Written upon the east end of the Tomb.

"Ask who lies here, but do not weep;
He is not dead, he doth but sleep.
This stony register is for his bones;
His fame is more perpetual than these stones.
And his own goodness, with himself being gone,
Shall live when earthly monument is none."

Written on the west end thereof.

"Not monumental stone preserves our fame,
Nor sky-aspiring pyramids our name.
The memory of him for whom this stands
Shall outlive marble and defacers' hands.
When all to time's consumption shall be given,
Stanley, for whom this stands, shall stand in heaven."

We have no certain evidence that Shakespeare occupied the period of his retirement in writing anything new,

nor did he take any pains to secure the issue of a perfect edition of his works.

His carelessness about the fate of his writings has often been commented on. Many of his plays were printed during his life, but they are believed to have been surreptitiously obtained by the booksellers, and given to the world without his sanction. They are, as might be expected, full of inaccuracies. It was not till 1623, seven years after his death, and six months after that of his widow, that the first complete edition of his dramas was published. The reason why he did not publish his plays in his lifetime was, no doubt, because it was for his own interest and that of the other proprietors of the Blackfriars and Globe theatres, that the curiosity of the public should be kept up by their not having access to a knowledge of his plays except by coming to the theatre to see them acted. Spurious editions of them would, for a similar reason, be allowed to remain full of errors, as these would damage their authenticity. The reason assigned for non-publication is a perfectly tangible one, for his profits from the stage were very large, while all he could have obtained from publishing, especially as rival editions could not be prevented, must needs be trifling, and such a step would have damaged the profits of representation. That the publication of his dramas was not before the death of his widow, is perhaps due to her having an interest for life in the profits arising from their being acted. So far as the copyright is concerned, we may suppose it went out of Shakespeare's hands, as an individual, and became the property of the copartnership of

which he was one. Of course, as we have shown, it was for the interest of both parties that the publication should be delayed as long as possible. In the case of Ben Jonson, no such reason for non-publication would obtain, since the acting of his plays drew but scant audiences after the novelty was gone. Accordingly, he published in 1616 a complete edition of his plays in a folio volume, which also contained a number of epigrams as well as additional poems. The circumstances we have mentioned above are sufficient to explain why Shakespeare did not publish an edition of his dramas, as he did his "Venus and Adonis," and his "Rape of Lucrece." He would rest secure that they would go down safe to posterity, since the Blackfriars company, a considerable number of individuals, had a vested right and a tangible interest in them, and since his productions had become standard plays in the theatrical world. The number of MS. copies, too, must have been considerable, since actors must have play-copies, so that he would apprehend no great danger from the accidental destruction of manuscripts. Heminge and Condell, who published the folio of 1623, seem to have printed from Shakespeare's own MSS. They put on the title-page, "Published according to the True Originall Copies;" and in the Address prefixed, they say, "His mind and hand went together: and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." Still it is matter of surprise, that he was at no pains to secure that a perfect edition of his dramas should one day be published, and at least to revise his MSS. This is the sort of carelessness of

which Ben Jonson accuses him, when, instead of praising him for having blotted hardly a line, he wishes he had blotted a thousand.

This feature in Shakespeare is characteristic of most minds in whom the spontaneous is remarkable. Spontaneous geniuses are often careless. Yet there are reasons why we should not altogether regret what is, notwithstanding, a real defect. The creative lies in the region of the spontaneous, the critical in that of the reflective, and between the creative and the critical there is an antagonism. The critical tends to curb the creative, and often dwarfs its proportions, or stifles it altogether. The absence of those astonishing flights into the region of the new, when the imagination has its wings clipped by a critical judgment, would be too dear a price to pay for precision and elaborate finish. From Shakespeare's point of view, to whom language flowed almost with the ease of thought, defects of expression and careless inaccuracies would appear trifles, for the ideal mind naturally contemplates the whole, and not the parts in minute detail. How great the contrast in certain things between Milton and Shakespeare! The former, with unquenchable zeal, spends a lifetime in accumulating materials for his immortal epic. The latter seizes on some fragment of an old story, or some plot of a forgotten play, in order to invest it with the imperishable creations of his inventive genius.

Regarding the last days of William Shakespeare we know but little. That he was a member of the Protestant Church is indubitable, although Davies absurdly

says "he dyed a Papist." We have no evidence regarding the religious state of his mind. Halliwell * remarks, that the epitaph on his daughter seems to imply the contrary of his becoming piously inclined in his latter days. It reads thus :—

" *Witty above her sexe*, but that's not all,
WISE TO SALVATION was good Mistriss Hall.
 Something of Shakespeare was in *that*, but *THIS*
WHOLLY of Him with whom she's now in blisse."

His will is dated 25th March 1616. The nature of his fatal malady does not appear. He died on the 23d of April 1616, as we believe, on his fifty-third birthday. He was buried two days after in the chancel of Stratford church. The flat stone which covers his grave bears an inscription which tradition ascribes to the poet himself.† The grave is near that part of the wall against which the charnel-house was erected, and to that the inscription is supposed to allude, by whomsoever it was written.

With regard to Shakespeare's personal appearance, Aubrey says, "He was a handsome, well-shaped man." It has been inferred from some expressions in his Sonnets that he was lame. In the 37th—

"As a decrepit father takes delight
 To see his active child do deeds of youth,
 So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth."

And in the 89th—

"Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt."

* Halliwell, p. 270.

† See page 103.

Suppose these allusions are not metaphorical, still we conclude, if he was lame, his lameness was not such as to impair his activity. The bust in the chancel of Stratford church bears in itself the evidence of its genuineness. The forehead is at once broad and high, and the general development is what we would expect in such a man. In the original colouring, the eyes were painted a light hazel, and the hair and beard auburn. These were probably the natural colours. The bust was repainted in 1748, but the original colours were retained. In 1793, Malone had it painted white by a common house-painter, and in that state it now remains. Another likeness of Shakespeare, which is probably authentic, is a half-length engraving on the title-page of the folio edition of his works, published in 1623. An engraving from that is to be found in vol. i. of Collier's edition of Shakespeare's Works. There is a considerable difference between the features in this and those of the bust. Possibly the latter, which is more full in the lower part of the face, represents the poet at a later period in life; but it must be remarked that there is a family likeness in all old engravings, and they are not to be trusted for the exact delineation of particular features.

In finishing this sketch of the great dramatist's life, the reflection is forced upon us that, after all the research that has been made, and all the materials which have been accumulated, it must be evident to any one who has studied the results with care, that we know little of Shakespeare from them all. Owing to the diligent and persevering investigations of Malone, and more recently of

Collier, Knight, and Halliwell, we have something like a consistent fabric of the external events of his life. But, with the exception of some valuable hints from Ben Jonson, how little do we know from all these materials regarding the real opinions and the inner life of Shakespeare! For the real life of the man we must look to a totally different source, and one which has not yet been investigated in this point of view—his dramas.

We must not, indeed, confound the Man with the Poet. It is one thing what a man is, another thing what characters he can conceive, comprehend, and express. Still there are many of Shakespeare's characters that utter sentiments and speak in a language far removed above the level of themselves. We are to look on these as having an individuality of their own, and speaking in character for the most part, and yet occasionally being used as a mouthpiece, whereby the dramatist gives utterance to his most private thoughts. Thus Prospero in the "Tempest," when he says—

"And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

or Isabella in "Measure for Measure:"—

"Oh, but man, proud man!
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
As makes the angels weep: who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal."

There are also other characters in his dramas, which are the expression of the poet's own individuality, although no one an embodiment of the whole of it, for Shakespeare is many-sided. More could be learned regarding the character of this wonderful man from a comprehensive study of these, than from those semi-fabulous traditions which have come down to us, and the mere external events of his life.



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON,

AS ASSOCIATED WITH SHAKESPEARE.



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON.

CHAPTER I.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON.

Shakespeare's genius original and self-developing—Hence it matters little where he was born—Stratford in the olden time, why interesting—The antiquity of the town to be expected—Stratford monastery from 693 to Norman Conquest—Notice in Domesday Book—Old charters—Incorporation in time of Edward VI.—Population—Old buildings extant—Fires—Pestilence—Society changed.

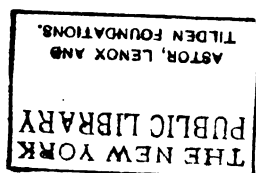
THE genius of William Shakespeare is pre-eminently original and self-developing. His language is his own. However much his expression is enriched by the spoils of the drama before his time, it is totally unlike anything that went before it. But he is no less original in his thoughts. Search the pre-existing literature for his conceptions of man,—for his characters, such as Jaques, Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth,—for the sublime ideas among which his imagination revels; they are nowhere to be found. That his genius is self-developing follows by a natural law from its being original, for self-development is simply the growth of originality. Such being the case, it would have made little difference to the general magnitude of Shakespeare's intellect, whether he had been reared amid the bustle

of a city or at a peasant's hearth in some quiet hamlet, or had he been born in a totally different age. Yet, although that is true, this most imitative and sympathetic of human spirits, in a peculiar manner wears the complexion and gives expression to the ideas and aspirations of his own times. No other age could have produced his dramas just as they are. It is this that invests Stratford of three centuries ago with a peculiar interest. The less we know of the individual man Shakespeare, the more do we wish to know regarding the society which moulded and formed his character in conformity with itself. The old scattered town, with its timber-framed houses,—the every-day life of its inhabitants,—the town-talk of the citizens,—the topics of absorbing interest in public affairs, acquire, for this reason, an importance which would not otherwise attach to them.

Stratford-upon-Avon can boast of a high antiquity, and was very old even in Shakespeare's time. It is situated on the right bank of the Avon, and, as its name (from the Anglo-Saxon *stræte* or *strete*, road) indicates, is at that point where the highway from Henley in Arden and the places beyond, leading through Oxford to London, crossed the river by a ford ere bridges were erected. The Avon at this point ceases to be navigable ; and from that we would naturally expect to find a town here even in the earliest times. The place where water-carriage ceases, becomes a depôt for goods, which forms the nucleus of a town ; and, accordingly, on nearly all rivers we find a town occupying such a position. The circumstance we have just mentioned may account



STRATFORD ON AVON FROM CROSS ON THE HILL.



for the considerable relative importance of Stratford during certain portions of its history, which it does not now maintain. In Anglo-Saxon times, Warwickshire was within the territory of the Mercians, and the name Stratford can be traced as early as the reign of their king Ethelred. It appears that during his reign, St. Egwin, who founded the magnificent Abbey of Evesham, and who was raised to the see of Worcester as third bishop, exchanged with Ethelard, a petty Mercian prince, the monastery of Fladbury, in Worcestershire, for that of Stratford. The charter of exchange is to be found in "Heming's Chartulary." As St. Egwin must have been for some time in the monastery of Stratford before he was elevated to the bishopric of Worcester, we have 693, the date of his elevation, as a fixed point before which the monastery certainly existed. Probably it was founded in the reign of the first Christian king of the Mercians. Little is known regarding the history of the monastery between 693 and the date of its annexation to the bishopric of Worcester. In 845, Berthulf, the nineteenth king of the Mercians, by a charter given at Tamworth, granted the monastery with its adjuncts to Heabert, the tenth bishop of that see. During the same century another notice of it occurs in a deed dated 872, by which Werferth, bishop of Worcester, grants to Eanwulf two farms at Nuthurst in the woodland, for himself and his three next heirs, with a reversion to the monastery of Stratford. The dissolution of the monastery took place probably in the reign of Edward the Martyr, when Elfer, a powerful earl of Mercia, drove the monks from all the monastic

institutions in his jurisdiction, and put secular canons in their place. At all events, we hear nothing of it for two centuries between this last mentioned date and the time of William the Conqueror. It is probable that meanwhile the monastery and its revenues had been in the possession of the bishops of Worcester. In the four centuries before the Norman Conquest, during which, as we have seen, a monastery existed, we certainly know nothing of the town Stratford except by inference. No doubt a hamlet had existed all along, which gradually rose in importance. In "Domesday Book," compiled between 1080 and 1086 by order of William the Conqueror, containing a survey of all the lands in England, the bishop of Worcester, then St. Wolstan, is said to hold, and to have held, Stratford. The land is reckoned at fourteen and a half hides,—an uncertain quantity, since a hide is estimated variously from as much as one plough could till to a hundred acres. There was a mill yielding 10s. per annum and a thousand eels. The whole manor, which in King Edward's time had been worth 100s., was now valued at £25,—no inconsiderable sum at that time. After this period the town gradually increased. A charter was granted by Richard I. for a weekly market to be held on Thursday. Other charters were obtained in the reigns of King John and Henry III. for annual fairs, and a patent in that of Edward III. for levying a toll during a number of years towards paving the streets. A regular charter of incorporation, however, was not obtained till the seventh year of Edward VI., 1553, which settled *the municipal government of the burgh*. The corpora-

tion, in the time of John Shakespeare, the father of the poet, consisted of a bailiff, fourteen aldermen, and fourteen burgesses. The bailiff, or chief magistrate, annually elected from among the aldermen, held a Court of Record every fortnight for causes not involving above £30. There was a court-leet which appointed ale-tasters—officers to inspect the measures and quality of ale and beer sold within the burgh—and also four assessorors, who were sworn to assess penalties for offences in cases not fixed by statute. The offices of constable and chamberlain also existed, the former being the executive officer of the town. We learn from the records that John Shakespeare successively filled all these offices till in 1568 he became chief magistrate. The subject of municipal government in Shakespeare's native town becomes an object of interest, when we note that the self-management exhibited in this small burgh is precisely the same quality which, on the larger scale, has developed the British Constitution. The population of Stratford at that time, judging from the average of births and deaths, was about sixteen hundred. The town in appearance was very different from its modern representative. It consisted of low thatched cottages and timber-framed houses, built in a very irregular and scattered fashion, with gardens separated by walls and ditches. Except Shakespeare's birth-place, an old house with the date 1596 on its front in High Street, and the Grammar School, the ancient houses have disappeared. The venerable church and the Guild chapel, however, still remain as they were in Shakespeare's time. Another old structure is the stone bridge on the

Avon, built by Sir Hugh Clopton, lord mayor of London, at his own expense, in the reign of Henry VII. Previous to that time, there was only a wooden bridge without a causeway. In the war between Charles I. and the Parliament, one of the arches, apparently the second from the east end, was broken down by Colonel Bridges, to prevent incursions of the enemy. It was rebuilt in 1652. It is by no means surprising that so little of the ancient town remains, considering the materials of which the houses were composed. The roofs of thatch, as well as the timber used in the building, rendered the town liable to fires. In the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, two dreadful fires broke out, which consumed two hundred houses, and destroyed property to the value of £20,000. Another fire occurred during the reign of James I. in 1614, which, in less than two hours, burned to the ground fifty-four dwelling-houses besides barns and stables, and on this occasion the town narrowly escaped destruction. Fire was not the only foe to whose ravages the inhabitants were exposed. The pest which raged in Europe in 1564 visited Stratford. From the end of June to the last day of December, grim death stalked about the streets, and numbered two hundred and thirty-eight victims. The future dramatist was born in April of this year, but happily his family escaped the epidemic. Where more than a seventh part of the population is carried off, we must regard the plague as a fatal one compared with those of our own day. The low, ill-ventilated houses and the stagnant ditches would extremely aggravate the visitation.

In comparing the Stratford of Shakespeare with its modern representative, as great a change may be observed in the complexion of its society as in the appearance of the town. Many of the leading men, in the olden time, held property in land, and had a considerably different social and political position from the citizens of a modern burgh. We must keep this in view in studying the characteristics of that society which educated the youth of the great dramatist, and in the bosom of which he spent his years of retirement.

The modern town is a clean and pleasant place, without much stir or traffic, and with little that would strike the eye of a stranger as remarkable, did he not know that this was the birth-place of William Shakespeare ; that to it he returned, when he had done with the cares and toils of life, to live over again in remembrance the happy days of his youth, and to enjoy rest in retirement and amid the society of his friends.

CHAPTER II.

SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTH-PLACE.

Old house in Henley Street—Purchased by his father in 1575—The history of this property—The house a good one in the sixteenth century—Description of the interior—The butcher's shop, and the kitchen—Room in which the Poet was born—Plaster cast of bust—Associations.

To the pilgrim who travels to Stratford to visit the memorable spots associated with the "myriad-minded" man, the poet "for all time," the first object of attention is his birth-place. Tradition and concurrent evidence point to an old tenement on the north side of Henley Street, as the house in which he was born; and at least it must have been the home of his boyhood. It was not, certainly, till 1575, eleven years after his birth, that his father became proprietor of this and the adjoining house. The property is described as consisting of two messuages (dwelling-houses), two gardens, and two orchards, with their appurtenances; and was purchased of Edward and Emma Hall for £40. It is believed, however, that John Shakespeare had occupied one of the houses in lease previous to his purchase. He had also a copyhold tenement in the same street, purchased in 1556 from Edward West, but this has never been proved to have been his residence. The history of the two messuages may here be given in brief. In a deed of sale dated 1591, the tenement of John Shakespeare is named as bounding the property sold;

and in 1597 he sells a portion of his ground for £2. There is every reason to think this was his residence till his death. As John Shakespeare died intestate, the Henley Street property descended to his eldest son William, as heir-at-law. In his last will the poet devises to his sister Joan, married to a man named Hart, one of the houses in which she lived, as a residence for life, under a rent of 12 pence, and bequeaths the whole property to his daughter, Susanna Hall. It accordingly fell into the hands of her daughter, Mrs. Nash, afterwards Lady Barnard, who left both houses to her kinsmen, Thomas and George Hart, the grandsons of Joan Hart, Shakespeare's sister. At the date of her will, 1669, one of the houses was the Maidenhead Inn. This afterwards became the Swan Inn, and subsequently the Swan and Maidenhead. The house in which Mrs. Hart had lived was divided into two tenements, the lower portion of one of them being used as a butcher's shop. Although the property annexed became gradually alienated, the houses did not pass out of the Hart family till 1806, when they were bought by Mr. Thomas Court. They have now been purchased from his family by the Stratford and London Shakespeare Committees, on behoof of the nation, for £3000, and an additional portion of the original property has been acquired for £820.

The old oak-framed house in which the immortal poet was born, is a humble edifice, with nothing of interest about it save its air of antiquity. It was unquestionably, however, a highly respectable house in the sixteenth century; and in looking at it we must

divest our minds of the associations which would be connected with such a dwelling in our own day, and judge of it rather from the social status of the family which then occupied it. The basement floor now consists of a butcher's shop in front, with a kitchen behind. Entering by the doorway, we observe a dilapidated, cheerless apartment, with its broken stone pavement, its open window, a sill-board still spread out, and the hooks sticking in its walls. It was here one of the Harts had plied the trade of a butcher. The gloomy place back from this is the old kitchen. Doubtless the dreamy boy would often sit by its glowing hearth, and hear many a tale of the olden time. In his youthful days books had not become common, and few could read; in consequence of which, the people were thrown back on the unwritten literature of story and tradition. The bygone history of England was rich in events that would tell by a fireside, from the days of Robin Hood and his merry men in Sherwood Forest, down to the murder of the young princes in the Tower by the hired villains of Richard III. By this kitchen hearth, the sitting-place of some portion of the household at least, now cold and deserted, Shakespeare, as a boy, had often listened to these old tales, as they plied the busy task in the long winter evenings; and many an old ballad had he heard sung or recited about Douglas and Percy, and other heroes, as he sat on the chair in one of those ample chimney corners, and gazed into the gleaming embers, or looked up the wide chimney for some passing star. In the window of this apartment there existed at one time a pane of stained glass, having

on it the arms of the Merchants of the Woolstaple. This was supposed to favour the idea that John Shakespeare was a wool merchant; but probably the pane had been transferred from one of the chapel windows by one of the Harts, while engaged in repairing them. There was, moreover, on the wall a representation in relief of the combat between David and Goliath, with the inscription,—

“Gollath comes with sword and speare,
And David with a sling;
Although Gollath rage and sweare,
Down David doth him bring.

SAMUEL, xvii., A.D. 1606.

Ascending by a dark and narrow staircase, we enter the chamber where the immortal bard was born. It is a rather low room. The old ceiling is covered with lath and plaster, but the antique oaken floor still remains, though much worn at the seams. The whole surface of the walls, and even the ceiling, is covered with the names of visitors, among which may be seen the autographs of Scott and Byron. These inscriptions made a narrow escape from destruction on the occasion of a quarrel, having been brushed over with whitewash; but as the important article of size had been omitted in its preparation, this coating was carefully washed off, and the names were restored. Washington Irving speaking of them says: “The walls of its squalid chamber are covered with names and inscriptions in every language, by pilgrims of all nations, ranks, and conditions, from the prince to the peasant; and present a simple but striking instance of the spontaneous and universal

homage of mankind to the great poet of nature."* His visit is still spoken of with interest in Stratford.

In this room there is a plaster cast of the bust in the monument, which may be studied with advantage, as the other is too high for close inspection. The place now looks bald and dingy, but we have no doubt it wore an air of taste and comfort in the sixteenth century, when it would be hung with the painted cloths then common.

We associate this place with the dawn of genius, with its strange and mysterious longings ere it take shape and know itself. In this homely abode the genial boy lived, and dreamt of the great unknown world which he longed to see, and yet play a part in it, at a time when he knew not what a great destiny was before him, and how many pilgrims in after days would visit the place of his birth, to requite in some sort with sympathy the immense benefits he has conferred on man by his immortal writings.

* Sketch-Book, "Stratford-on-Avon."

CHAPTER III.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND GUILD HALL.

Tile-roofed staircase—Grammar School above and Guild Hall below—The Guild, when founded—Thomas Jolyffe founds the school—Suppression of the Guild by Henry VIII.—Charter of Edward VI.—Plays in the Guild Hall—A rage then for dramatic entertainments—Explanation of story about killing a calf.

KEEPING to the order of time, the next place of interest connected with Shakespeare, after his birth-place, is the school at which he was educated. The Grammar School is an old and not very pretentious building. Entering the inner court, we mount by a stair to the school-rooms. The ascent in Shakespeare's time was by an external staircase, roofed with tile, which remained unaltered until recently. The ancient school-room was subsequently divided into two, and a modern plaster ceiling put below the old oak roof of the sixteenth century. It has nothing of its former antique appearance at present. An antediluvian desk, now removed, was absurdly enough shown as Shakespeare's, but nothing whatever is known regarding its age. The Guild Hall occupies the ground floor of the building, and was formerly undivided. It was used for a long period as Town Hall, a small chamber here being the place of deposit for the Corporation records, manuscripts, &c. The Guild, to which this building and the adjoining chapel belonged, was an association partly

for civil and partly for religious objects. In 1296, during the reign of Edward I., Robert de Stratford obtained permission of Godfrey Gifford, bishop of Worcester, to found an hospital and erect a chapel, for the use of the brethren and sisters of the fraternity. They received a patent from Henry IV. for the extension of the association, which was to be in honour of the Holy Cross and of John the Baptist. This patent, which was afterwards confirmed by Henry VI., empowered the society to elect eight aldermen of their number, who should choose a master and two proctors to manage their lands and revenues. In 1482, Thomas Jolyffe, a priest and member of the Guild, granted lands and tenements in Stratford and Dodwell to the association for founding a free school. This formed the commencement of the Grammar School. At the general dissolution of monastic institutions, which took place under Henry VIII., the revenues of the Guild in that wholesale confiscation fell to the Crown. There were at that time four priests belonging to it, who drew stipends of £5, 6s. 8d. each; and a clerk who had a salary of £10 a-year as schoolmaster. This alienation of the property by Henry VIII. did not continue long; for in 1553, during the reign of his son, Edward VI., the revenues which had belonged to the Guild were granted by that excellent prince to the Corporation of the town. The royal charter for the incorporation of the inhabitants, then given, provides that a portion of these revenues should go to the support of a free grammar school, for the instruction and education of boys and youths. As Shakespeare's education has been

fully spoken of already,* it is unnecessary to refer to the subject again. It is worthy of note, however, that in the Guild Hall we doubt not he received a kind of education which was as important in its way as the Latin and Greek he learnt in the ancient room above. Here those dramatic performances took place before the mayor, the aldermen, and the common council, to which we referred above.† No doubt Shakespeare in his youth had been a frequent spectator of these plays, and had caught his earliest inspiration from them. There was something infectious in the atmosphere of the time, from which he caught the contagion. Never, either before or since, has there been such a rage for dramatic entertainments as was then. One reason is to be found in the fact that the minds of the masses had been awakened, as the mighty revolutions in religion which had just taken place clearly show, but as yet there was nothing to satisfy their intellectual craving, in the absence of literature, and in the deplorable want of education, where a high bailiff of Stratford, the father of the poet, could not write his own name. Shakespeare must have tried his hand at acting very early in life. In fact, Aubrey, who tells us the story of his being a butcher's son, and that when he killed a calf he would do it in a high style and make a speech, says further, that he was naturally inclined to poetry and acting. Besides the explanation of the story about the killing of the calf, which we adverted to before,‡ there is a much more likely one advanced by Mr. Raine. He supposes the tradition, which Aubrey wrote

* Page 20.

† Page 33.

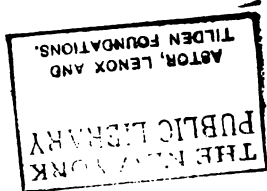
‡ Page 28.

down in a mutilated and altered form, to refer to an old semi-dramatic entertainment entitled "Killing the Calf," played by a person concealed by a curtain from the spectators. Mr. Halliwell says: "The possibility that Shakespeare, in his early days, contributed to the amusement of his neighbours by a performance of this kind, and that it is to such a circumstance Aubrey alludes in the passage above quoted, derives some support from the fact that this early entertainment was one of those vernacular, traditional pastimes, which have tenaciously held a place in the popular mind for centuries. The interlude of 'Killing the Calf' was commonly known in the north of England till within a recent period; and it is yet remembered in some parts of Scotland, Mr. G. V. Irving having thence recovered a copy of it as performed by the working-classes of Forfarshire and Lanarkshire; which, though evidently of a character too greatly altered from the original to be here introduced, is exceedingly curious as a proof of its long-continued popularity. The performer retires behind a screen, and carries on a dialogue in two voices, representing of course two characters, with occasional imitations of sounds, such as grinding, produced by rubbing a piece of stone on the floor, or by a similar contrivance."* A tradition has been preserved at Leicester that Shakespeare acted in the Guild Hall there; and this is in favour of the supposition that he was connected with players previous to his going to London.

* Halliwell's folio "Shakespeare."



SITE OF "NEW PLACE" AND THE GUILD CHAPEL FROM SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN.



CHAPTER IV.

THE CHAPEL OF THE GUILD.

Erected in time of Henry VII.—Old chancel—Sir Hugh Clopton's monument—Remarkable paintings disclosed during repairs—Probably seen by Shakespeare.

THE Guild Chapel, which is immediately beside the Guild Hall and Grammar School, was erected by Sir Hugh Clopton in the reign of Henry VII., and its architecture is in the style of that period. The building is a good one, but not highly ornamented, and the square tower is rather low. The windows are similar in style to those in the chancel of Stratford Church. When the old structure was pulled down in Henry VII.'s time for the erection of the present fabric, the chancel apparently was left, for it is different from the rest of the building, in style, colour of stone, and masonry, and is evidently of greater antiquity. It may possibly be part of the original chapel, built by Robert de Stratford in 1296. Against the east wall of the nave is erected a monument to Sir Hugh Clopton, who built the chapel at his own expense. The inscription recounts the good deeds of this benefactor to Stratford, such as his building the bridge over the Avon. In 1804, during the repair of the chapel, a series of remarkable paintings was discovered below the coats of whitewash with which the walls had been covered. Those in the chancel were chiefly on the subject

of the true cross, as might be expected, when we remember that the fraternity bore the title of "The Guild of the Holy Cross." One painting represented its rescue from the pagan Chosroes, king of Persia, by the Christian emperor Heraclius. Others figured its discovery at Jerusalem by Helena, the mother of Constantine. In the nave, on the west wall, upon the south side of the arch, was represented the Martyrdom of Thomas à Becket, who kneels at the altar while the knights who slew him are hewing him down and stabbing him with their swords. Beneath this St. Michael was represented bearing a scroll with a number of verses written on it, describing the vanity of human ambition. Over the arch was a picture of the Day of Judgment, part of which represented the torments of the wicked. On the north side of the arch was figured the combat between St. George and the Dragon, and below it an allegorical painting on a moral subject, having scrolls with inscriptions. It seems, too, that the Dance of Death was painted on the walls, but it is not known where. The paintings in this chapel were mutilated at the time of the Reformation, the crosses especially being defaced. It was probably in the Puritan age that the defacement was completed, although it is not known when the whitewash was first put on. We are inclined to think that Shakespeare, as a boy, must have seen these impressive pictures, though certainly they had suffered some violence before then. Whether or not the school was kept in the chapel, he must have been in it times untold; and such scenic representations would awaken extraordinary feelings

in a mind like his. We cannot but regret that the destruction of Roman Catholic works of art was so indiscriminate. Those who destroyed them did not know how important a purpose they might one day serve. Of the paintings which adorned this structure, a set of beautiful coloured engravings has been published, which are taken from drawings made at the time of their discovery.

CHAPTER V.

NEW PLACE.

Shakespeare's residence—New Place built by Sir Hugh Clopton—"The great house"—Shakespeare's desire to found a family—Curious notice regarding a Reformed preacher—Property bequeathed to Mrs. Hall and her heirs male—Queen Henrietta Maria—House ultimately sold to Rev. Francis Gastrell—Barbarous destruction of the mulberry-tree and house—The wood of the mulberry, how disposed of.

THIS "fair house," with its gardens, its lawns, its beautiful shrubberies and pleasant walks, was the home of Shakespeare, to which he retired in 1610 to spend the remainder of his life in ease and rest amid the happy scenes of his youth and the friends he loved so well. Unfortunately nothing of New Place remains but the site, and even it is cut up and built upon. The house was originally built by Sir Hugh Clopton, the munificent benefactor of Stratford, in the reign of Henry VII.; and here, after having been Lord Mayor of London, he spent his last days. In his will it is termed "*the great house*," and was no doubt then one of the best houses in the place. From the Cloptons it passed into the hands of William Underhill, Esq., from whom it was purchased by Shakespeare in 1597. It is not known when it was first termed New Place, although it certainly went by that name before Shakespeare bought it. This appears from a survey made in 1590, quoted by Mr. Halliwell, in which William Underhill, Gent., is said to occupy a certain house

called *the New Place*. The property sold to the dramatist is described as consisting of one messuage (dwelling-house), two barns, and two gardens, with their appurtenances.

Shakespeare's purchase took place only about ten years after he left Stratford with hardly a groat in his purse, and probably too having just been bearded by that formal and pompous dignitary, Squire Lucy. We make no doubt Shakespeare felt the indignity keenly, the more because he was the eldest son of his family; and he too had gentle blood in his veins, through his mother, Mary Arden,—a daughter of an old house,—the Ardens of Wellingcote. It is not necessary to suppose, however, that he had any of these unpleasant recollections before his mind in purchasing a mansion and lands in Stratford. He clearly had an ambition to found a family,—a much deeper and more permanent motive, which also explains better why he procured a coat-of-arms through his father in 1599. We have few facts about New Place as connected with Shakespeare, but with it we associate his period of retirement, for notices of which we refer to his Life.* We mention here only a single incident. The following extract from the Chamberlain's accounts for 1614 refers to New Place in an interesting connection:—

"Item, for on quart of sack and on quart of clarrett winne,
given to a preacher at the Newe Place,..... xxd."

This took place two years before the poet's death. We infer from it that the Reformed preacher was entertained

at New Place, and that in all probability he was the guest of good Mrs. Hall, who may have been living with her father. It is not likely that a guest of the dramatist, who had a cellar of his own, would be receiving compliments of wine. The religious tendencies of the time are not obscurely indicated by this trifling item in the Chamberlain's accounts.

Shakespeare, dying here in 1616, left the house and grounds to his eldest daughter, Susanna, Mrs. Hall, with remainder to her heirs male, or, failing them, to those of her daughter Elizabeth; in default of whom, to the heirs male of Shakespeare's second daughter, Judith. Dr. Hall died here in 1635, and in 1643 it is probable Mrs. Hall occupied the house, when Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I., came to Stratford, during the civil war, with a large army, and took up her residence in New Place for three weeks. After the death of Mrs. Hall, which took place in 1649, the property passed into the hands of her daughter Elizabeth, first Mrs. Nash, and afterwards Lady Barnard; and as the latter died without family, the house was sold in 1675, and ultimately came once more into the possession of the Clopton family. The sequel of its history remains to be told. In the middle of last century it was sold to the Rev. Francis Gastrell, vicar of Frodsham, in Cheshire,—a wealthy man, and one of those narrow-minded, ignorant, and conceited mortals, who could not comprehend why people made such an ado about Shakespeare. He began by cutting down the poet's mulberry-tree, and sold it for fire-wood, in consequence of being bothered by visitors. The wood was purchased

by Mr. Thomas Sharp, clock and watchmaker, of Stratford, who made an almost incredible number of curious toys and useful articles out of it, and afterwards gave the assurance of their genuineness by making a solemn affidavit that he used no other wood but that of the mulberry for the purpose. Cowper alludes to the prominence given to the mulberry during the jubilee, in the well-known lines:—

“ The mulberry-tree was hymned with dulcet airs;
And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry-tree
Supplied such relics as devotion holds
Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.”

To which we may join the chorus sung by Garrick:—

“ All shall yield to the mulberry-tree,—
Bend to thee,
Blest mulberry.
Matchless was he
Who planted thee;
And thou like him immortal be.”

The house itself shared the same fate as the mulberry-tree. As it was assessed for poor's-rates, and, Mr. Gastrell thought, too highly, since, forsooth, he lived part of the year at Lichfield, though his servants occupied the house in his absence, in 1759 he pulled down the building in spite, and sold the materials. Shakespeare's garden, too, has unfortunately been broken up and built on.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOWN HALL—THE JUBILEE.

Original Town Hall built in 1633—The present structure in 1768—Shakespeare's monument—The Hall—Portraits of Shakespeare and Garrick—Of Queen Anne and the Duke of Dorset—Occasion of the Jubilee—Annual birth-day festival.

THE Guild Hall was the place of meeting for the Corporation in Shakespeare's time. In 1633 the first Town Hall was erected, which lasted for more than a century. The present structure, in High Street, was built on the site of the former, in 1768. It is a rather handsome building of stone, and contains several paintings which are worthy of attention. The town arms appear on the west front; and at the north end, in a niche, there is a statue of Shakespeare, which was presented to the Corporation by Garrick, the famous actor. The poet is figured in an attitude similar to that in his monument in Westminster Abbey, resting on some volumes placed on a pedestal, on which appear the busts of Henry V., Richard III., and Queen Elizabeth. He points to a scroll, on which are inscribed those grand lines from "Midsummer Night's Dream," Act v., Scene 1 :—

" The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

On the pedestal there is the following quotation from
"Hamlet," Act i., Scene 2, adapted :—


"—— Take him for all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again."

Beneath, an inscription tells that—

"The Corporation and Inhabitants of Stratford, assisted by the munificent contributions of the Nobility and Gentlemen of the neighbourhood, rebuilt this edifice in the year 1768. The Statue of Shakespeare was given by David Garrick, Esq."

The Hall, an upper room 60 feet long and 30 wide, has in it several large paintings of some interest. At one end of the apartment is a full-length portrait of Shakespeare by Wilson, in which the poet is represented in a sitting posture, as if in the moment of inspiration. It is not a picture of high art. The portrait of Garrick by Gainsborough is at the opposite end. It was presented to the Corporation by the actor himself, and is a good likeness. He is figured leaning against a pedestal, on which appears a bust of the great dramatist, a taste for whose works he did so much to create. Another of the paintings is a full-length of Queen Anne, purchased at the sale of the paintings belonging to the College. There is here, too, a portrait of John Frederic, Duke of Dorset, who at the time of the jubilee was Lord of the Manor and High Steward of Stratford. It was presented by the Duchess, but is only a copy, and not a particularly good one.

When the Town Hall was rebuilt in 1768, the Corporation presented the freedom of the burgh to Mr. Garrick, a copy of which was enclosed in a beautiful box made from the wood of Shakespeare's mulberry-



tree. This tribute seems to have led Garrick to set about instituting a jubilee in honour of Shakespeare. Extensive preparations were made for some time before. An amphitheatre, capable of holding a thousand spectators, was constructed on the Bankcroft beside the Avon. The festival lasted from Wednesday 6th to Friday 8th September, 1769, and immense crowds were gathered from all parts of the surrounding country. We refer to Mr. Wheeler's History of Stratford for details. An annual festival is now held in Stratford, by the Shakespeare Club, on the 23d April, the birthday of the illustrious poet.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COLLEGE.

Chantry founded by John de Stratford—Charter of Henry V.—College suppressed by Henry VIII.—Buildings sold to John Combe—Pulled down in the end of last century.

IN 1332 John de Stratford, archbishop of Canterbury, founded in connection with the parish church of Stratford, then a rectory, a chantry of five priests, two of whom, the warden and sub-warden, were perpetual. At different times in the reign of Edward III., he gave them lands and revenues for their support, and bestowed on them the patronage of the church.

It was not, however, till 1353 that the mansion, which was subsequently termed the COLLEGE, was built for their residence by Ralph de Stratford, bishop of London. Henry V., in the beginning of his reign, granted them a charter which conferred many privileges, and it seems to have been after this that the Church of Stratford acquired the title of Collegiate. The College was suppressed in the thirty-seventh year of Henry VIII., and the buildings were granted by Edward VI. to John, Earl of Warwick, afterwards Duke of Northumberland. On his attainder they reverted to the Crown, in whose possession they remained till sold to John Combe, the well-known usurer on whom Shakespeare wrote the famous epitaph. He made it his residence till his death in 1614. As the dramatist was an inti-

mate friend of Combe, and had made Stratford his settled home, at least since 1610, we may be assured he was a frequent guest at the College. Unfortunately, however, nothing of it now remains but the site. After passing through many hands, it was sold in the end of last century to a gentleman, who disposed of all the pictures, family portraits, and furniture, and in 1799 and 1800 pulled down the whole building. Happily its appearance may still be seen from wood-cuts in Knight's and also in Halliwell's "Shakespeare," where elevations of the interior of the quadrangle and of the outside are given, as well as a view of the fine old hall of the College, with its arched ceiling of stucco-work. The position of the College was on the west side of the churchyard, and it was enclosed by spacious gardens. Perhaps it need hardly be added, it was not called a College in the modern sense of the word, having had nothing whatever to do with education.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH—WITH SHAKESPEARE'S MONUMENT AND TOMB.

Stratford Church, an old structure in the regular form of a cross—Old timber steeple—Alley of limes—Niches at west door—The aisles—Chancel erected by Dean Balshall—Charnel-house—The monument—Description—The bust of Gerard Johnson—Barbarity of Malone—The mischief may be undone—Proofs that the bust is a genuine likeness—No engraving gives its expression—Two men in Shakespeare—Engraving in folio of 1623—The tombs of the Shakespeare family—Anne Hathaway—The Poet—Quaint lines—Thomas Nash—Dr. Hall and Mrs. Hall—Dr. Balshall's tomb—John Combe's monument—His character—Monument of the Clopton family—Ancient font—Reflections.

WE now retire from the hum of the town to visit the grand old cathedral which contains the monument and the tomb of Shakespeare. The "solemn temple," where the ashes of the immortal poet repose in peace, is by far the most memorable place associated with him, since all else has become so sadly changed. This venerable pile, surrounded by tall elms which have waved beside it for generations, with its walls of yellow oolite now mellowed with age, its graveyard dotted with tombstones, and its numerous monumental tablets and inscriptions within, looks more like a mausoleum for the dead than a church for the living. The foliage of the trees in the churchyard affords a cool and delightful shade in leafy June, while the solemn stillness, unbroken save by the gentle murmur of the Avon, adds a sacredness to this retired spot.

The Collegiate Church is a very old structure,

although all the parts of it are not equally so. Dugdale supposes it to be nearly of the Conqueror's time, judging the architecture of the tower to be of that Norman style which prevailed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This style is readily distinguished from that of a later period by having the doors and windows round-headed, and from its general massiveness. A low, square, central tower, is, moreover, a characteristic feature of the period. He has, however, considerably over-rated the antiquity of the building. The church, which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is built in the regular form of a cross, with a nave corresponding to the longest portion, a transept to the short arms, and a chancel or choir to the part above the transverse bar. The tower was originally surmounted by a lead-covered timber steeple, only half the height of the present one; a thing which must have taken much from the stateliness of the edifice as a whole. The tall stone spire now existing was built by the inhabitants of Stratford in 1763. Its height above the tower is eighty-three feet, that of the tower being eighty. From the gateway, an avenue arched over with lime-trees leads to the church porch. The branches of the limes have been gracefully entwined, in the manner one sometimes sees in an arbour. We enter the nave by a Gothic porch at the end of this alley, though the main entrance is by an arched door at the west end, above which are three niches, the canopies of which are beautifully ornamented. These may have contained emblems of the Trinity, to which the church was dedicated. The general aspect of the nave is imposing. Its massive hexagonal pillars rise into pointed

arches, above which the numerous Gothic windows, two for each arch, admit a stream of cross light. The great west window is of a handsome design, though not highly ornamented. The north aisle is ancient, but its exact age is uncertain. The south aisle was rebuilt by John de Stratford in the fourteenth century. Passing through the transept, the age of which is disputed, we enter the chancel or choir, by far the most interesting and beautiful portion of the edifice. It was erected by Dr. Balshall in 1465, in the room of an older one then pulled down. The large windows, five on either side, were once adorned with painted glass. The east window is in the perpendicular style, and is an object of fine taste. Two beautiful niches at the same end are worthy of attention: They are ornamented in the style usually called the Tudor or florid Gothic. The stalls which belonged to the ancient choir still stand on both sides, having on the lower part of the seats emblematic designs in carved-work. Near Shakespeare's grave, a Gothic doorway once led into the charnel-house, which rested on the north wall of the chancel. The charnel-house or crypt, pulled down in 1800, in consequence of dilapidation, was very ancient, and probably of the same age as the old chancel which was taken down in 1465, when the present one was erected. They may have formed part of the church which existed in the time of Edward the Confessor, and consequently would be the oldest portion of Stratford Church. A drawing of the vault was made by Captain Saunders, a wood-cut from which may be seen in Halliwell's "Life of Shakespeare." It is of the old Saxon architecture, with

pillars separating into three ribs at a short distance from the ground. The floor was

"O'er covered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
With reeky shanks, and yellow, chapless skulls,"

and presented a most ghastly appearance. The room above is thought to be that assigned as the sleeping apartment of the four children choristers, who assisted daily in the church-service.

We now turn our attention to the objects which give an interest to all the others,—

SHAKESPEARE'S MONUMENT AND TOMB.

The monument is on the north wall of the chancel, at an elevation of about five feet from the floor. It must have been erected soon after the death of the poet, and is mentioned in the commendatory verses prefixed to the first folio edition of his works, published in 1623. The niche in which the bust stands is arched over and fronted with Corinthian columns of black polished marble, of which the capitals and bases are freestone gilded. Architraves of marble have been substituted for former ones of alabaster. The arms of Shakespeare, in relief, are supported above the entablature. The armorial bearings are—a shield *or*, on a bend *sable*, a tilting spear of the first, the point upwards, headed *argent*. The crest is a falcon with spread wings, grasping in its talons a golden spear, and standing on an esquire's helmet. The supporters are two boys in a sitting posture. The one towards the right has the eyes closed, and rests the right hand on a skull, while holding in the left an inverted flambeau, as if to

extinguish it. This figure probably represents Death. The one on the left holds a spade in the right hand, and rests the left on a fragment of rock. The eyes of this figure turn towards the other, and it probably represents the Grave. A skull, coloured brown, occupies the summit of the monument. The poet is figured with a sheet of paper on the cushion before him ; and in his hand, at one time, was a pen of lead, for which a real pen had been substituted, but both are now removed. The dress was a slashed doublet coloured scarlet, over which was a black gown without sleeves. Originally the cushion was green in the upper part and crimson in the lower, with the cord along the middle and the tassels gilt. The bust, which is of a bluish limestone, had been stained with the natural colours. The face and hands were flesh-coloured, the eyes of a light hazel, and the hair and beard auburn. In this state it was allowed to stand till 1748, when the monument was repaired, and the original colours carefully restored at the instance of Mr. John Ward, grandfather of Mrs. Siddons and of Mr. Kemble, who gave the profits arising out of a performance of "Othello" for that purpose. Unfortunately, Mr. Malone, in 1793, was permitted to execute what he considered an improvement ; namely, to coat the bust with white paint. This piece of barbarity has spoilt the expression, and it is to be hoped that the mischief will one day be undone. As the paint is now very hard, and the bust in consequence of that might require to be steeped in order to remove it, the thing which is at once the safest and most efficacious to use, is a solution of caustic potash ; and if anything were tried in addition,

benzole, an ethereal substance, would be less like injure the stone than turpentine. The original could then be restored by staining.

The sculptor who executed the bust was G. Johnson, a Dutchman of Amsterdam,—the same made the monument of John Combe. Probably it modelled from a cast taken after death, sent to sculptor, who lived in London. Mr. Fairholt has a number of acute and valuable strictures, some of which we quote :—" A very careful examination of the bust he says, " will enable us to detect minute and delicate traits of features, which would scarcely have been served to us except through means of the artist working from a cast. There are slightly indicated furrows on the forehead ; a very marked peculiarity in the manner in which passes from the summit of the nose round the lower part of the right eye ; and a most life-like expression and individuality about those which surround the mouth, particularly on the left side. The eyes are only badly executed, but are untrue to nature. They are mere elliptical openings, exhibiting none of the delicate curvatures which ought to be expressed. The ciliary cartilages are straight, hard, and unmeasured, and the glands in the corners next the nose are omitted. The remarkable want of truthfulness in the eyes easily be accounted for, if we believe the sculptor have worked from a cast of the features, in which case the eyes would have been closed. In his copy it is essential that they should be opened ; and the manner in which this is done is a still greater proof of his inability to have executed the rest of the features."

well, had he not entirely followed a good model in every particular."* It is thus almost absolutely certain that we have here the genuine lineaments of Shakespeare's features,—a thing which makes it a thousand-fold more valuable than an idealized bust, though it were the work of a Phidias or a Praxiteles. The brow is capacious, though not unnaturally high. The central ridge from the top of the forehead towards the crown is elevated, as is the case in many poets. To this remark Schiller is an apparent exception; but in him the same elevation becomes evident when we notice the depth of the ear. A remarkable feature in this bust is the length of the upper lip. It is related by Mr. Britton, that when he, Sir Walter Scott, West, and Spurzheim, were invited by Bullock to examine a cast made by him from the monument, Scott could not reconcile himself to the extraordinary length of the upper lip. It was found, however, on applying the compasses, that Scott's own upper lip was a quarter of an inch longer. It may be remarked that no wood-cut or engraving hitherto made gives at all the expression of the bust, which is a remarkable one. In fact, from the gradation of depth, this could hardly be done except by a photograph, or, of course, by a perfect cast. There are distinctly two men in Shakespeare, just as there are in Socrates and Immanuel Kant. If, by cutting off the view of the lower portion of the face with a book or a like object, you look at the upper part of the face and head, so as to include the eyes, the expression is intellectual and

* See Halliwell's folio "Shakespeare," p. 234.

noble; while, if you similarly cut off the view of the upper part of the face, the expression of the lower is sensual and gross. These two antagonistic elements undoubtedly existed in the character of the man, and there is evidence of the struggle between them in his sonnets.

There are one or two portraits of Shakespeare which are probably genuine. We refer to the Chandos picture, and to that held to be painted by Cornelius Jansen. Of these nothing requires to be said here. There is an engraving, too, by Droeshout, prefixed to the folio of 1623, for whose fidelity we have the attestation of Ben Jonson, in his well-known lines. Of this we say nothing more than that it is evidently the same man as in the bust, but far inferior in expression, especially in regard to a feebleness and want of force in the lower portion of the face.

Below the cushion in the monument is the following inscription :—

JVDICIO PYLIVM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM,
TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MÆRET, OLYMPVS HABET.

STAY, PASSENGER; WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST?
READ, IF THOV CANST, WHOM ENVIOUS DEATH HATH PLAST
WITHIN THIS MONVMENT: SHAKESPEARE, WITH WHOME
QVICK NATVRE DIDE; WHOSE NAME DOES DECK YS. TOMBE
FAR MORE THEN COST; SITH ALL YT. HE HATH WRITT
LEAVES LIVING ART BYT PAGE TO SERVE HIS WITT.

Obiit. AÑO. Dñi. 1616.

Ætatis 53. Die 23 Ap.

THE TOMB.

Immediately below the monument, in front of the altar-railing, are the graves of Shakespeare and his family. The slab nearest the wall is the gravestone of Anne Hathaway, his wife. A brass plate in the stone

contains the following epitaph, expressive of a daughter's dutiful regard :—

HERE LYETH INTERRED THE BODYE OF ANNE, WIFE OF MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, WHO DEPTED. THIS LIFE THE 6TH DAY OF AVGVST, 1623, BEING OF THE AGE OF 67 YEARES.

Vbera, tu mater, tu lac vitamq. dedisti,
 Væ mihi ; pro tanto munere Saxa dabo !
 Quam mallet, amoueat lapidem, bonus Angel'ore'
 Exeat ut Christi corpus, imago tua.
 Sed nll vota valent, venias cito Christe, resurget
 Clausa licet tumulto mater, et astra petet.

Under the next slab rest undisturbed the ashes of the immortal poet himself. The following lines are inscribed on it :—

GOOD FREND FOR IESUS SAKE FORBEARE,
 TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOSED HEARE :
 BLESTE BE Y^E MAN Y^E SPARES THES STONES,
 AND CVRST BE HE Y^E MOVES MY BONES.

Tradition ascribes the lines to Shakespeare himself, and assigns as a reason for them his horror of having his bones lifted and thrown into the adjoining charnel-house. Some writers speak of them as a wretched doggerel, worthy only of the grave-digger or the parish clerk; but these fine-spun criticisms would make verse "too fine for either warp or woof." No doubt they came through some such hands, and did not gain by it, but at the least they have proved thoroughly adapted for the end intended, whoever was their author, and have deterred every profane hand from meddling with the poet's grave.

The next gravestone is that of Thomas Nash, who married Elizabeth, the daughter of Susanna Hall. Mrs. Nash survived her husband, and became subsequently Lady Barnard. The inscription is—

104 SHAKESPEARE'S MONUMENT AND TOMB.

HEERE RESTETH Y^r BODY OF THOMAS
 MASHE, ESQ. HE . MAR. ELIZABETH THE
 DAUGHTER OF JOHN . HALL, GENT.
 HE DIED APRILL 4 . A . 1647. AGED 53.

*Fata manent omnes, hunc non virtute carentem
 ut neque divitiis abstulit atra dies.
 Abstulit, et referet lux ultima, siste viator,
 si peritura paras, per male parta peris.*

The tombstone adjoining this is that of Dr. Hall, who married Shakespeare's eldest and favourite daughter, Susanna. He was an eminent physician in Stratford:—

HEERE LYETH Y^r BODY OF JOHN HALL,
 GENT: HE MARR: SUSANNA Y^r DAUGHTER
 & co-heire
 OF WILL. SHAKESPEARE, GENT. HERE
 A
 DECEASED NOV^r 25. A^o 1635. AGED 60.

*Hallus hic situs est medica celeberrimus arte,
 Expectans regni gaudia læta Dei.
 Dignus erat meritis qui Nestora vinceret annis,
 In terris omnes, sed rapit æqua dies;
 Ne tumulto, quid desit adest fidissima conjux,
 Et vitæ Comitem nunc quoque mortis habet.*

The last of the group is over the grave of Mrs. Hall, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, who appears to have been an excellent woman:—

HEERE LYETH Y^r BODY OF SUSANNA
 WIFE TO JOHN HALL GENT: Y^r DAUGHTER
 OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, GENT:
 SHEE DECEASED Y^r 11th OF JULY, A^o
 1649, AGED 66.

*Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
 Wise to Salvation was good Mistriss Hall,
 Something of Shakspeare was in that, but this
 Wholly of him with whom she's now in blisse.*

Then, Passenger ha'st ne're a teare
 To weepe with her that wept with all;
 That wept, yet set herself to chere
 Them up with comforts cordiall.
 Her love shall live, her mercy spread,
 When thou ha'st ne're a teare to shed.

We notice only two monuments further in the chancel. Under the north wall, within the railing, is an altar tomb, covered with various figures, now defaced. It is believed to be the tomb of Dr. Thomas Balshall, warden of the College, who rebuilt the chancel, and died in 1491. Near the east window, on its north side, is the tomb of John Combe, with a recumbent effigy, resting under an arch. The figure, dressed in a long gown, was executed by Gerard Johnson,—the same sculptor who made Shakespeare's monument. He died on the day of the great Stratford fire, 10th of July 1614. The inscription tells that he bequeathed twenty shillings, to be paid for two sermons to be preached in the church; £6, 13s. 4d. to buy ten gowns to ten poor people; and a hundred pounds to be lent to fifteen poor tradesmen in the borough, for periods of three years, at the rate of fifty shillings interest. These sums were to be paid annually for ever. His character appears pretty well in this bequest. There is the benevolence of giving so considerable a sum, according to the value of money then, as that just stated; and at the same time a carefulness that the money should not be abused, shown in the arrangement of letting it at a fourth of the usual interest, and for short periods. This prudence saves the tradesman from accepting money like a pauper, and sets him on employing it actively to advantage. It can-

not be too highly praised, but was probably allied to a certain close-fistedness not seldom conjoined with it. The story of the epitaph is given above.*

Leaving the chancel, and returning into the nave, we may visit the east end of the north aisle, once a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The altar-like tomb beneath an arch, is supposed to have been erected to the memory of Sir Hugh Clopton, who built the stone bridge over the Avon. The shields, which occupied the panels, have been removed. Among the other Clopton monuments in the chapel is the one against the north wall with two recumbent figures, the one of William Clopton, Esq., who is represented in armour, with his sword and gauntlets beside him, and a lion couching at his feet; the other of his wife Anne, daughter of Sir George Griffeth. The former died in 1592, the latter in 1596. On the east side of the chapel there is the gorgeous monument of George Carew, Earl of Totness and Baron of Clopton, and Joice, his Countess, who was the eldest daughter and heiress of William Clopton, Esq. The Earl wears a coronet, and is in armour. The effigies are coloured, and rest below an arch on Corinthian pillars, which is profusely adorned with angels and cherubim. A striking resemblance has been remarked between this effigy and existing portraits of the Earl.

We leave the numerous other monuments, tablets, inscriptions, &c., in Stratford Church unnoticed. They have no connection with the Bard, whose tomb alone

* See page 55.



SHAKESPEARE'S TOMB IN CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - STRATFORD ON AVON.

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makes this church more interesting than many others that could be named.

Some notice, however, must be taken of the font. The ancient font, of which an Engraving is given, has a curious history. In the middle of the seventeenth century, when a new one was erected, it was pitched into the charnel-house; and when that was taken down in 1800 was thrown out into the churchyard, and part of it employed by the parish clerk as a trough for his pump. From him it was bought by Captain Saunders, and at present it is in the garden of Mr. Heritage, builder. At this tastefully designed font Shakespeare probably was presented for baptism, but the occurrence of numerous domestic baptisms at the time prevents absolute certainty on this point.

On leaving the church, we pause for a moment to contemplate this ancient pile as a whole, with its grey spire and time-honoured walls. If we consider the length of time during which a religious fane has stood on or near this spot,—from the old Saxon times of Ethelred to the days of William the Conqueror, from him down to William Shakespeare, and now nearly three centuries more,—we cannot fail to be awed by the roll of ages, and the silent departure of successive generations. The tomb-stones, many of them very old, and covered with moss, are worthy of attention. None of them, however, bears a date so far back as the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER IX.

SHOTTERY—ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE.

Shottery the place of Shakespeare's courtship—An antique hamlet—The cottage—Its appearance—The interior—A farm-house in the olden time.

"And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad,
Made to his mistress' eyebrow."

LEAVING the town of Stratford and all its pleasant associations with the immortal bard, we now take a stroll into the country to visit Shottery and the cottage of Anne Hathaway.

Shottery is an antique hamlet, which has about it an air of charming rustic simplicity. This pleasant and secluded spot is associated with Shakespeare as a lover. 'Twas here his courtship with Anne Hathaway, the village belle, was carried on, when gentle Will was but eighteen, while she was in the bloom of womanhood at twenty-six. The village, which is only a mile from Stratford, contains a few timber-framed cottages surrounded by gardens and orchards, which are evidently very old. A brick row in very bad taste has now sprung up beside them. Still, making an effort to abstract from this and some other innovations, we may picture to ourselves the Shottery of old Richard Hathaway, of the lovers, and of Fulke Sandels and John Richardson, who became bondsmen for their marriage. The "Shakespeare Tavern" is one of those

old cottages which have about them the look of former times. The Paces, to whom it once belonged, were descendants of a family of that name, who lived in Shottery in Shakespeare's time. Not far from the cottage of the Hathaways, a little brook crosses the road, over which there used to be an antique bridge of logs with transverse planking and a single low rail. This, too, has been superseded. Proceeding to Anne Hathaway's cottage, the traveller sees a long tenement, with thatched roof, and timber-framing filled in with brick and plaster-work. The foundation of the walls consists of slabs of the lias shale obtained in the neighbourhood. The edifice had been a single dwelling, though apparently composed of two distinct houses. It is now divided into three tenements. A stone in the central chimney with the inscription I H 1697, indicates the time when the house was last repaired by a John Hathaway. Since that time the external appearance has been little altered. Going into the interior, we observe an old kitchen with stone floor, roof of strong beams, and spacious fire-place, with cozy chimney corners for the privileged. The everyday sitting-place of the family is a tolerably large apartment, with timbered roof and some portions of the wainscot panelling still existing. The bacon cupboard to the left of the fire-place has the letters I H E H I B and date 1697 marked on the cross-bar of its latticed door. These are the initials of John and Elizabeth Hathaway, and some third person unknown, perhaps the joiner who made it. Above the parlour is a bed-room containing an old bedstead of carved oak, which may possibly be as old

as Anne Hathaway's time, and which is said to have been handed down as an heir-loom. There is also a specimen of heavy home-spun linen preserved in an old chest, which is marked with the initials E H.

Looking at the house as a whole, we would infer that this, in Queen Elizabeth's time, was the dwelling of a substantial farmer. It must at that time have possessed the appearance of taste and comfort, when its occupants were surrounded with abundance. The garden and orchard which formerly belonged to the house have now been detached from it. As we have already spoken of Shakespeare's marriage,* we do not here return to the subject.

* Page 33.

CHAPTER X.

CHARLECOTE.

Passages in Shakespeare's life are made immortal—The deer-poaching story—Discredited by Malone and Knight—Sir T. Lucy identified with Justice Shallow—John Foxe—Tomb of Sir Thomas Lucy—Charlecote—The Great Hall—Scenery around the mansion—True theory of large trees—Associations with Shakespeare.

" Under the greenwood tree
 Who loves to lie with me,
 And tune his merry note
 Unto the sweet bird's throat ;
 Come hither, come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
 But winter and rough weather."

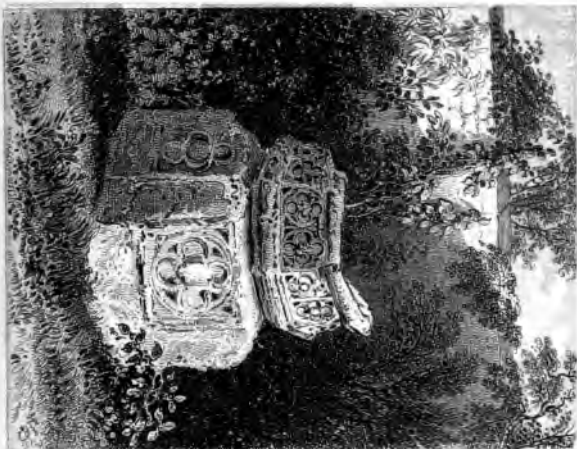
THERE are probably few passages in Shakespeare's life which he has not immortalized in some form or other, and it is perhaps as well we know so little about him, for it would detract much from his mysterious power, were we familiar with the vulgar realities which he has sublimed by the magic touch of genius. The tradition regarding a youthful adventure of this sort, which connects him with Charlecote, is to the following effect :—

He had been engaged in deer-poaching with some young fellows in the preserves of Squire Lucy, and was unfortunately caught and detained all night in the lodge. Next morning he was summoned into the presence of the pompous justice, Squire Lucy, in the hall at Charlecote, by whom he was subjected to a humili-

ating examination, and probably dismissed with an admonition. Stung by the affront, the incensed poet took his revenge by composing a satirical ballad on the Squire, and affixing it to his park gate; which led the latter to commence a legal prosecution against him for deer-stealing. To avoid this, Shakespeare found it necessary to abscond from Stratford and betake himself to London.

We accept the tradition as true in its main features, although there were other reasons why he should set out for London besides this. Malone has attempted to discredit the story by showing that Lucy had no deer-park at Charlecote, from which he infers that he had no deer. Mr. Knight, too, rejects the tradition, and certainly refutes Ireland's statement, that the affair took place at Fulbrooke Park, by showing that Fulbrooke did not come into the possession of the Lucy family till the grandson of Sir Thomas purchased it in the time of James I. It is conclusively proved by Mr. Collier, however, that Sir Thomas Lucy had deer; which shelves Malone's refutation. According to Mr. Knight, the man who incurred the poet's enmity was the second Sir Thomas Lucy, who succeeded to his father's estates in 1600, and who, he supposes, may have attempted to lower in the eyes of his neighbours this upstart actor who had the presumption to style himself Gentleman. The concurrent evidence, however, points decisively to the elder Lucy as the original of Justice Shallow, who is not termed in the dramas a knight, but only a squire and a justice of the peace, which Lucy was at the time of the deer-stealing affair, though he was subsequently knighted. He was sprung from an old family,

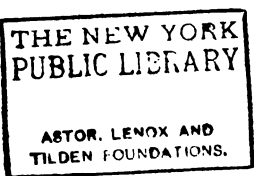
• Wichtig: an der 1. und 2. Stelle



ANCIENT FONT.



TOMB OF SIR THOMAS LUCY.



which had long possessed Charlecote. The present mansion was built by him in 1558. Queen Elizabeth conferred on him the honour of knighthood in 1565, and visited his seat at Charlecote in 1572. In 1578 he was high sheriff, and was returned member of Parliament for Warwickshire in 1584. There can be no doubt he was excessively pompous and self-conceited—qualities which Shakespeare makes consummately ridiculous in the person of Robert Shallow, Esquire; but we are of course to accept the poet's innuendos with considerable reservation, and all the more that possibly, in accordance with Mr. Knight's hypothesis, the allusions may refer partly to the second Sir Thomas. During the persecutions of the Bloody Mary, he sheltered John Foxe on his expulsion from the university, and employed him as tutor in his family. Foxe afterwards became famous as the author of the "Acts and Monuments of the Church." Sir Thomas Lucy, the eldest of the name, died on July 6, 1600.

TOMB OF SIR THOMAS LUCY.

At the church of Charlecote are to be seen three monuments of the Lucy family. In that of Sir Thomas, whom Shakespeare has made immortal, there is an effigy of the knight in armour resting in a recumbent position, with a figure of his wife Lady Jocosa (Joyce) beside him. On a tablet above, an inscription, signed with her husband's name, records the many virtues of this excellent lady. The second tomb is that of his son, below whose effigy in armour is a smaller figure of his lady in a praying posture, with figures of their six sons

and eight daughters represented on the plinth. The monument of the third Sir Thomas is by far the most costly. He rests on his elbow, and behind him, on one side, are represented books with titles on the back, and on the other the knight himself on his charger.

The mansion of Charlecote is a handsome building in the Elizabethan style, built in 1558, and stands on a site somewhat elevated above the Avon, which winds through the park. It forms three sides of a quadrangle, and has a gate-house with an oriel window over the gateway, and flanked by octagon towers.

THE GREAT HALL.

Although the interior of the house has undergone great changes, the hall retains many of its former features, having been restored with taste. This was the scene of Shakespeare's examination subsequent to the deer-stealing exploit. The room is a handsome one, with a fine arched roof and large bow-window opposite the fire-place. In the stained-glass are a few armorial bearings of the family, some with the date 1558, in which the three white luces, or pike fishes, are observable which identify Justice Shallow with Squire Lucy. The fire-place is as old as the house itself, and bears the letters T. L., the initials of the Squire, in relief and gilt, and also the date 1558, when the mansion was erected. On the mantel-shelf there is a bust of Sir Thomas, taken from the effigy in his monument. This is the only likeness of the Squire, the picture which represents a gentleman sitting at table with his lady being that of the second Sir Thomas. If one may judge

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from the bust, the Squire must have been extremely formal and precise, with an extraordinary idea of his own consequence; but certainly one that would not make such a fool of himself as Master Shallow. He has acquired a most unenviable notoriety, and an immortality he did not reckon on. He seems to have been engaged in other broils with his neighbours; for, as noticed by Halliwell, there is extant among the miscellaneous papers at the Rolls House, a list of those who made a riot upon Master Thomas Lucy, Esquire, which contains the names of thirty-five inhabitants of Stratford. He had probably treated many with lordly insolence, before he was unfortunate enough to meet in with one who was armed with the lash.

The woodland scenery around Charlecote is richly picturesque, and in its natural features must have remained unchanged since Shakespeare's time, although the trees of that age have apparently all fallen under the woodman's axe, and others have come to a stately growth on their site. There is a stamp about a tree of three centuries old which is unmistakable, and which cannot be said to belong to any in the park. The immense trees dug up in our mosses have led to theories about the decay of vegetative power and a change of climate, since the time those massive oaks flourished in spots where none grow now. But these hypotheses are all unnecessary. Nothing else is required to produce trees as huge as ever existed, except that individuals should be allowed to grow undisturbed for centuries, as they did when this country was covered with gloomy forests, seldom trod even by the wander-

ing savage. A charm attaches to this undulating park of Charlecote, with its clumps of fine elms and beeches, its spreading oaks, and herds of deer; and we may associate with it Fulbrooke park, which is farther from Stratford on the Warwick road, because it must have been in roaming through these woodlands at noonday and by moonlight that Shakespeare acquired those romantic ideas of forest life which he has embodied in "As You Like It." It is probable, though not certain, that the forest of Arden in that play is the Warwickshire Arden, which in the times of the old Britons and the Saxons was an immense forest, though it is now open country under cultivation. There are French elements in the play, and also an Arden in France; but that matters little in determining the question, since in the ideal world created by the poet, his imagination groups together scenes and characters from various times and countries. Thus he introduces lions, serpents, and palm-trees, denizens of a tropical clime, into a European forest. Whichever Arden Shakespeare meant, we have no doubt it was in wandering through the thickets in the vicinity of his native place, and, perhaps, in reclining

"Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood,"

he had marked the death of a stricken deer.

"A poor sequestered stag,
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
Did come to languish; and, indeed, my lord,
The wretched animal heaved forth such groans,
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting; and the big round tears

Coursed one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase; and thus the hairy fool
Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears."

No doubt, like the melancholy Jaques, he had moralized the spectacle, and possibly in continuing his walk had then formed his contemplation of the world as a stage on which is acted the play of human life, the seven ages of man being the acts.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AVON.

The beautiful depending on what the mind brings to it—Rivers connected with poetry—Kenilworth—Guy's Cliff—Warwick Castle—The Hatton Rock—Bidford—General view of the valley of the Avon—Shakespeare as a naturalist—Warwickshire flowers and birds alluded to in his plays.

"The current, that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;
But, when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamell'd stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so, by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wide ocean."

THE passing pilgrim may vainly look in the sweet valley of the Avon for those charming scenes which Shakespeare depicts in his living pages. This is because the perception of the beautiful depends so much on the imaginative elements which the mind brings to the outward. The ancients imagined that, far away towards the setting sun, lay the Islands of the Blessed, where was a garden full of trees hanging with golden fruit, guarded day and night by an ever-wakeful dragon. Modern voyagers have never been able to discover these happy abodes, and find in their place only the Azores and Canary Islands, where oranges may be seen when ripe hanging amid the deep green foliage. This hint may serve to check undue expectations on the part of *the traveller* visiting the rural scenes of Shakespeare's

life. We associate his country rambles and his study of nature with the Avon, and indeed the banks of rivers have always been the classic ground of poetry. Living streams have afforded to poets the greatest number of beautiful images, and on their brink Nature unfolds her charms in their most pleasing form. Here wild-flowers grow in the greatest profusion, and the skirting woods are vocal with the sweetest songsters. The Upper Avon rises near Naseby, but we need not notice any place on or near it above Kenilworth, as being unconnected with Shakespeare. The ruins of this noble castle are highly worthy of being visited, and still give evidence of its ancient magnificence. Kenilworth has been the scene of many interesting events in English history. Queen Elizabeth made her last visit here to the Earl of Leicester in 1575; on which occasion Shakespeare, as a boy, is supposed to have been present.* Sir Walter Scott, in his "Kenilworth," has immortalized this episode in baronial life. The grounds of Guy's Cliff beside the Avon are very beautiful, and visitors are permitted to have ready access to them. This is the retreat of Earl Guy, the slayer of the dun cow. A mile below this is the ancient city of Warwick. The castle is on the brink of the Avon, and is a noble building, the most ancient part of which is called Cæsar's Tower. The other, named Guy's Tower, dates from 1394. Proceeding downwards, the stream at one time flows through flat meadows, at another is skirted by high and wooded banks. Below Charlecote the most

* See page 23.

interesting point is at the Hatton Rock, where the river flows rapidly through a narrow channel at the base of a richly-wooded cliff. The scenery between this and Stratford is highly picturesque. The stream flows gently amid fringes of rush and sedge; its forest trees give place to willow pollards, which line the banks in the vicinity of the town. After passing the church and the mill, the walk is beautiful, keeping the horse-track on the right bank down to Bidford, the scene of one of Shakespeare's youthful adventures with the Topers and Sippers.* With regard to the scenery around Stratford, it is observable that the general outlines are rather tame. The beauty lies in those scenes by the river side, where the view of the spectator is narrowed. There are some elevated stand-points where the effect is fine, looking in the direction of the Ilmington and Meon hills. The Avon is seen winding through a broad and rich valley, now embosomed in wood, now flowing with a wide sweep through low-lying meadows, while the deep green and other hues of the variegated landscape melt gradually into the tints of the blue hills which bound the view.

To the student of Shakespeare, the valley of the Avon will ever have a charm, because it was here nature was studied by nature's poet. Shakespeare's descriptions have all the freshness and fidelity of original observation. He saw the world with his own eyes, and everywhere gives proof of his having been a close observer. It gives an additional interest to his local-

* See page 31.

ity, to know that most of his plants are to be seen in the fields and waste-places around his native town. He had no doubt become familiar with many of them from observation in youth, but it is probable that much of that exactness which he shows in his knowledge of natural history is due to subsequent study after he wrote plays and knew the artistic value of such knowledge. He had ample opportunities for acquiring it, as he always spent some part of the year in Stratford while he lived in London. Among his plays, "Winter's Tale" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" are pre-eminent for their beautiful allusions. In the former he speaks of—

"The marigold, that goes to bed with the sun,
And with him rises weeping."

How beautifully this expresses the closing of the flower after sunset, and the pearl drops of dew hanging from its drooping head in the morning! Among Perdita's spring flowers are—

"Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength."

The daffodil, or narcissus, grows wild in woods and thickets, and has its petals pale yellow. It flowers in March, and often adorns our cottage gardens; most of the species of the violet flower in spring, and some also through the summer. Shakespeare elsewhere calls it accurately "the nodding violet,"—that is, *nutant*, having

the head bent downward. The last two lines quoted here express figuratively the fact that the pale-yellow primrose flowers in April and May, and the corolla withers before midsummer. The minuteness of his observations is shown when he tells us of the fairy queen, "Midsummer Night's Dream," Act ii, Scene 1—

"The cowslips tall her pensioners be,
In their gold coats spots you see."

These specks in the corolla he calls in "Cymbeline" "the crimson drops i' the bottom of a cowslip." What an exact appreciation of things in their natural relations does he show in the lines, "Hamlet," Act iv., Scene 7—

"There is a willow grows a-saunt the brook
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream!"

As is well known, only the under side of the leaf in the willow is hoar-white, and hence naturally the hoar leaf is reflected from the water beneath.

Some difference of opinion has arisen regarding one of the fruits, with which Titania bids the fairies feed Bottom.—"Midsummer Night's Dream," Act iii, Scene 1—the "dewberry,"

"Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries."

Some for dewberry would read gooseberry,—a perfectly needless conjecture, as the dewberry is plentiful in Shakespeare's native locality. It is a species of bramble, the *Rubus cœsius*, with weak stems, slender prickles, and white or pale rose-coloured petals. The fruit, which is black with a bluish bloom, is larger grained and of a finer acid flavour than the common

bramble-berry. The dewberry, or blue bramble, is a small trailing plant, and may be seen in the hedges, thickets, and borders of fields around Stratford.

The general observation may be made regarding the plants and flowers to which Shakespeare alludes in his plays, that the traveller visiting the poet's native place at the different seasons, in spring—

"When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight,"

in middle summer, and when the year grows ancient, may see them all in the fields where he saw them.

It is equally true that his birds of song and other birds are natives of Warwickshire. His allusions to them are eminently beautiful and true to nature.

In "Macbeth," Act i., Scene 6, Banquo observes—

"This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells woingly here: no jutty frieze, buttress,
Nor coigne of vantage, but this bird hath made
His pendent bed, and procreant cradle. Where they
Most breed and haunt, I have observed, the air
Is delicate."

This is an exquisite description of the habits of the swallow and the observation, that where they most breed and haunt, the air is delicate, is a remarkably true one. The philosophy of the fact we believe to be this,—the swallow does not move northward and southward according to the temperature directly, but only in so far as that affects the existence of those insects on

which it feeds. These winged insects are always most numerous in mild and moist air, and the swallow naturally haunts the place where its food is most abundant. The snatch in "Cymbeline" which describes sunrise, the matin of the lark, and the opening of the marigold is extremely beautiful :—

"Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins arise
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes."

The epithets which Shakespeare applies to the lark contain a description in a word—"the shrill-gorged lark"—"the lark, the herald of the morn"—"the merry lark." He speaks of one of his native birds, where he paints so graphically the—

"Russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the air."

Mid. Night's Dream, Act iii., Scene 2.

The ousel-cock with orange-tawny bill, the throstle or song-thrush, the finch and the cuckoo of Bottom's song, are all exceedingly abundant in the wide vale of the Avon. Although it by no means contradicts the fact so clearly established by recent German critics, that our great master of the drama is a consummate artist, we may say of him with truth—

"Our sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
Warbles his native wood-notes wild."

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